

**Three high school educators' views on the influence
of play on learners, with a focus on the current shift to
online learning – a case study in the Western Cape of
South Africa**

by

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Declaration

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Abstract

I recognised the value of 'play' in my own art practice, while studying towards a Fine Art undergraduate degree. Approaching the making process with play allowed an exploratory process instead of a pressured environment of production. I realised that high school art learners could possibly also benefit from such an approach to their art projects. Therefore this study considered the presence of play in high school art education in order to determine the influence of play on the learners and what is needed for such play to be additionally included in high school art. This was achieved by investigating three high school art educators' perspectives on play in South African art education; also highlighting the increase of online learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.

This is an empirical research study as the experiences, observations and interpretations of educators are central to the study in this research. A case study research design was undertaken for conducting qualitative research by means of individual interviews and a group play workshop with the three participants. The participants were selected using non-probability sampling. Meaning was derived from their individual points of view, therefore an interpretivist paradigm was required. Inductive content analysis was used to draw themes from the discussions in the interviews and workshop.

The study found that play could have a beneficial influence on high school art learners. Yet there are factors that hinder play; especially time, fear of failure and the pressure of achieving high marks. Art educators however have a unique opportunity to foster a safe environment where making mistakes is acceptable, to explore and to discover through play.

Opsomming

Ek het die waarde van 'speel' in my eie kuns praktyk ontdek tydens die voltooiing van my Skone Kunste graad. Deur die maak proses met spelt e benader is 'n ontdekkings proses moontlik gemaak, in plaas van 'n produksie-omgewing waarin onder druk gewerk word. Ek het besef dat hoërskool kuns leerders ook daarby kan baat vind as 'n speelse benadering met hul projekte toegepas kan word. Die teenwoordigheid van spel in hoërskoolkunsonderwys is om hierdie rede vir die studie oorweeg om die invloed van spel op die leerders te evalueer en om te bepaal wat benodig word om spel meer deel van hoërskoolkuns te maak. Dit is moontlik gemaak deur drie hoërskool kuns opvoeders se perspektiewe oor spel in Suid-Afrikaanse kuns onderrig te ondersoek; die toename van aanlyn onderrig weens die Covid-19 pandemie beperkings, is ook beklemtoon.

Dat die ondervindinge en interpretasies van opvoeders as sentraal tot die ondersoek was het 'n empiriese navorsingstudie tot gevolg gehad. 'n Gevalle studie navorsingsontwerp is onderneem vir die uitvoering van kwalitatiewe navorsing deur middel van individuele onderhoude en 'n groep speelwerkswinkel met drie deelnemers. Die deelnemers is deur middel van 'n nie-waarskynlikheidsteekproefneming gekies. Betekenis is uit hul individuele standpunte verkry, dus is 'n interpretivistiese paradigma gebruik. Induktiewe inhoudsanalise is gebruik om temas uit die besprekings in die onderhoude en werkswinkel te identifiseer.

Die studie het bevind dat spel 'n voordelige invloed op kunsleerders op hoërskool kan hê. Tog is daar faktore wat spel belemmer; veral tyd, vrees vir mislukking en die druk om hoë punte te behaal. Kuns opvoeders het egter 'n unieke geleentheid om 'n veilige omgewing te skep, waarin dit aanvaarbaar is om foute te maak, om te verken en deur middel van spel te ontdek.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research

1.1 Introduction

This first chapter of the thesis presents the background to the research study, the problem statement, main research question and sub-questions. The aims and objectives of the research are provided furthermore, and the methodology of how the study was conducted is briefly explained. Boundaries and limitations to the study are also mentioned and the structure of the thesis is delineated lastly.

1.2 Background to the Research

While studying towards a Fine Art undergraduate degree, I frequently used 'play' as an approach to making art. The understanding of play for the purposes of this study pertains to creative or artistic play, the experimentation and exploration of mediums, materials and techniques; the curiosity of making or creating without necessarily having a clear or final idea for an artwork in mind. I often found it difficult to conceive new ideas or concepts in my practice. Play allowed me to explore different mediums, techniques and ideas at the beginning of each project. This brought about a less pressured environment for exploring and creating art. Looking back at my undergraduate studies, I am grateful for being encouraged by some lecturers to experiment and play more. However, I realised that play was not taught or encouraged as much in my school career. Thus my investigation of play in relation to high school education began.

This notion of creative play can take on many forms. Play can be understood and performed in various ways, especially in a school context where learners with different cultures and backgrounds in South Africa come together in one classroom. This study is central to a South African perspective of art education and therefore the history and context of South Africa form part of the framework of the study. Because of the diversity of the South African heritage, art takes on numerous forms and therefore play practices would also vary among different people groups, communities

and schools. The study is further contextualised in the recent shift to online learning and the impact thereof on teaching. With the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, and thus digital education being increased, art education also had to take on a new form.

My research was, therefore, aimed at investigating three high school art educators' perspectives on play in South African art education with an emphasis on online learning.

1.3 Problem Statement & Research Question

The purpose of this study was to investigate creative play by interviewing high school art educators and exploring how art practices related to play have recently adapted to a digital learning space. The focus was on high school art learners' artistic practices and the educator's observations of the learners' experiences with play. The possibility of play as an approach to art making which inspires creativity, curiosity and productivity is explored. Consideration was also given to the complexity of the South African context and specifically to the current shift to online learning initiated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The research question for the study was therefore formulated as:

How do high school art educators from three public schools in the Western Cape view the influence of play on the creativity, productivity and artistic abilities of their learners; and how has this changed due to the current shift to online learning?

Subsequent questions that this study expected to answer were:

- How does play affect the development of learners?
- How do educators incorporate or exclude play in their teaching and learning practice?

1.4 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this research study was to investigate the presence of play in high school art class rooms in the Western Cape. It was aimed at gaining an educator's perspective on how play influences their learners and how play may be hindered in

the learning environment. Another aim was to consider what the impact of play is on high school learners' holistic development. Furthermore, it aimed to realise what the educator's role is in facilitating an environment or play during normal school circumstances or online, during the Covid-19 restrictions.

Therefore the objectives of the study were:

- To interview participants individually about their experiences with play as high school art educators.
- To host an online workshop with the participants where ideas for play would be shared and tested.
- To allow participants to verbally reflect on play activities during the workshop.
- To analyse the participants' discussions from the individual interviews, as well as comments and artworks from the group workshop.

1.5 Overview of the Research Methodology

This empirical research study followed an interpretivist research paradigm, making use of qualitative research and thus involved an inductive research approach. A case study research design was followed in order to thoroughly investigate a small group of participants and gain insight into their perspectives. The participants were high school visual art educators based in the Western Cape; the City of Cape Town and Cape Winelands area. Only five of the fourteen high schools in the specified areas invited to take part in the study, accepted the invitation, with finally only three educators (from three different schools) responding to participate in the study. This weak response may have been due to the high workload of educators during 2021 due to a major shift in educational practices in schools to accommodate Covid-19 protocols. The interviews were conducted one-on-one between the researcher (me) and the participant (the high school art educator). The main objectives of the interviews were to gain an educator's perspective about play in art education, what their experience with play in the classroom had been and how this had changed since the sudden shift to online learning in 2020. After the conclusion of the interviews, an online workshop with the participants was conducted to put play in

practice and realise the extent to which play can be taught and included in a high school art classroom. Through the workshop the participants could gain ideas about how to incorporate and allow play in their own classrooms. Prior to collecting the data, ethical clearance for the study was granted by the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of Stellenbosch University. All participants were asked to complete a consent form before data was collected. Their names are reported anonymously in this thesis and they are referred to as P1, P2 and P3 respectively. Inductive content analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data from the study and themes were discovered and the findings are discussed.

1.6 Boundaries and Limitations of the Study

This is a mini-thesis conducted in one year as part of a structured Master's program and therefore time was the biggest limitation for the scope of the study. With regular changes due to Covid-19 lockdown regulations, many schools and educators also had time pressures and were thus not able to set time aside to participate in the study.

The study only focused on three high school art classrooms in a specific area of the Western Cape and the findings of the study could be very different in other regions of South Africa and in other world contexts. The conclusions drawn in the thesis are thus place-specific to the mentioned areas. The study also focused on the current use of play in art education, hence the results are time specific, especially when referring to the initial shift to online pedagogy in 2020.

With regard to finances, the main expense of the study comprised data costs for internet access for conducting online interviews and workshops. This was limited by personal finances, but caused no threat to the data collection and findings of the study.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research: The research topic is introduced and background to the research, in a personal and broader public sense, is provided.

The motivation for the research is given and limitations of the study are made clear. The structure of the study and thesis is explained.

Chapter 2: Contextualising the Study: Play is contextualised within art and then specifically within South African education. Play within art education is then expounded in the context of online learning. The implications of these contexts are discussed.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Perspectives: In this chapter, the theoretical perspectives that framed the study are discussed.

Chapter 4: Methodology: Here the method or process of the study is discussed in detail. The type of study with its specific research paradigm, approach and design is discussed, along with the sampling, data collection and data analysis methods. The ethical considerations of the study are also mentioned in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Data and Discussion: The findings of the study are presented according to themes derived from the collected data. The themes are then discussed separately.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Implications: The findings of the research are summarised and conclusions are presented accordingly. Lastly, suggestions for further research and critique of the research are provided.

Chapter 2: Contextualising the Study

2.1 Introduction

This chapter contextualises the study of this dissertation within South African education. The study is further contextualised within the online learning period resulting from issues around the Covid-19 pandemic, and the particular contexts of the schools, participants and me as researcher are discussed.

2.2 South African education context

South Africa has a history of great segregation – apartheid – on the premise of race related conflict in the country (Thaver & Thaver, 2010:49). This segregation inevitably made its way into the education system, that during apartheid disadvantaged schools with people of colour compared to schools attended by white learners (Abdi, 2002). The former, so-called Model-C schools were allocated to white-only learners and had large properties, many resources and were located in wealthy areas compared to schools that were made available to the non-white population. These facilities often lacked even basic resources such as water, electricity, let alone textbooks and education in their home language (Abdi, 2002; Dube, 2020). Clearly education resources were distributed unjustly among schools during apartheid. At present, resources are still more accessible to some schools than others. Now, no longer because of apartheid, but perhaps rather, because of large division in wealth among South Africans as well as the mis-management of resources by schools or even the government (Dube, 2020).

At the time of this research, 2021, 27 years into a democratic South Africa, many new policies and changes have been implemented in education since 1994 to bring transformation (Waghid, 2004:526; Thaver & Thaver, 2010:65). Waghid (2004:526) explains that the post-apartheid education policy was founded on the democratic principles of the Constitution and Bill of Rights of 1996. Thus, the Department of Education (DoE) introduced the Tirisano Project (meaning ‘working together’) in 1999 (ibid.). The aims of the initiative were to warrant the successful implementation

of the country's new outcomes-based education system, in keeping with "a spirit of democracy, respect for human rights, justice, equality, freedom, nation-building and reconciliation" and as a result striving to combat the theme of separate development because of a segregated past (Waghid, 2004:526; Abdi, 2002).

It is thus apparent in the National Budget that South African government has funded education immensely since 1994 (National Treasury, 2021:iv,v,214,215; Department of Finance, 1995:B.69). One of the largest segments of the South African national budget is attributed to the education sector (Amnesty International, 2021; Gustafsson & Nuga, 2020). Although the budget portions a large sum of its funding for educational purposes, these resources are not necessarily always managed effectively. In a 2019 UNICEF basic education brief for South Africa, it is stated that the "distribution of basic education resources in the total government budget does not yet reflect the vision of equitable access" (UNICEF, 2019:3). The credibility of expenditure of the budget for education is therefore questioned. Furthermore, with increased development in education and the need for online learning could result in larger disparities between wealthy and less fortunate schools (UNICEF, 2019:22). While some schools thus hardly have enough educators or textbooks, how could there be equal access to online learning (Amnesty International, 2021; Gustafsson & Nuga, 2020)? With the progression of education, and especially digital development in education, this separation among South Africans could either enlarge or be bridged, if managed correctly and justly.¹

Looking at the history and development of South African education contextualises the digital development of South Africa's educational landscape. The development and accessibility of distance education has progressed since the postal system was implemented many years ago (Pregowska, Masztalerz, Garlinska & Osial, 2021:20). Radio broadcasting of educational material was introduced in the 1920s with audio and video cassette tapes following shortly after, as well as the invention of television, which was revolutionary in the development of distance learning. (Pregowska *et al.*, 2021:6-7,9). The floppy disk, however, reached even greater heights as the transfer and storage of data was now possible through computers. The rise of the Internet

¹ However, investigating the development of South African education and the disparities of its people is not the focus of this dissertation. It simply aids in contextualising the study within a South African education background.

brought another radical shift in distance education, with innovative ways of teaching and learning (Pregowska *et al.*, 2021:10). According to Pregowska *et al.* (2021:11) the next steps in the development of technology are “immersive technologies, such as Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, and Mixed Reality, [which] have great potential to revolutionise education systems”. It is clear that progression in educational technologies has contributed immensely to distance learning, which is becoming all the more prevalent in South Africa and the world. Online learning has increased significantly since the outbreak of the Covid-19 coronavirus in 2020. Therefore, the need for distance learning has increased and access to online modes of learning is becoming a necessity for the future of South African education.

2.3 Covid-19 context with online education

The 11th of March 2020 can be marked as an important day in world history as Tedros Adhanom (2020) the director-general of the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the Covid-19 coronavirus a global pandemic.² Soon after, on 15 March 2020, South Africa was declared to be in a national state of disaster³ by President Cyril Ramaphosa. The country responded quickly, ordering to close schools and educational institutions from 18 March and assessing the situation to take further action as necessary (Ramaphosa, 2020a). Thereafter, on 26 March South Africa went into a national full lockdown for an initial period of 21 days in order to limit the spread of Covid-19 (Ramaphosa, 2020b). Schools remained closed, many businesses and non-essential establishments closed their doors temporarily and only essential services were allowed to operate. The stringent lockdown period

² A *pandemic* is confirmed when there are incessant outbreaks in communities as well as different continents, with reason to believe the spread and severity of the situation will continue (Adhanom, 2020). The Director-general of WHO, Tadros Adhanom (2020), stated that this declaration was not uttered lightly.

³ According to the Disaster Management Act [No. 57 of 2002] (2003:6) the word *disaster* refers to “a progressive or sudden, widespread or localised, natural or human-caused occurrence.” Such occurrences become *disasters* if it “(a) causes or threatens to cause- (i) death, injury or disease; (ii) damage to property, infrastructure or the environment; or (iii) disruption of the life of a community;” and “(b) is of a magnitude that exceeds the ability of those affected by the disaster to cope with its effects using only their own resources” (2003:6). Therefore, the Covid-19 pandemic was cause to declare a state of disaster (Zuma, 2020). The national state of disaster has been extended every month, since March 2020, and to date not yet suspended.

passed, however elements thereof in various forms were maintained throughout 2020 and is continuing.

As the 2020 school year progressed, many schools in South Africa partially opened to resume in-person pedagogy, with students returning in moderation according to a phased approach (Motshekga, 2020b). Currently, most schools in South Africa are yet to function at full learner capacity. With the advent of Covid-19, the Chinese government implemented the “Suspending Classes Without Stopping Learning” emergency plan (Zhang, Wang, Yang & Wang, 2020:1). Technology has made it possible to provide education using online platforms of communication between educators and learners (Zhang *et al.*, 2020:2). This perspective of continuing education outside of the traditional classroom was adopted by many other countries (Pregowska, *et al.*, 2021:117). South Africa followed suit. The Western Cape Minister of Education, Debbie Schäfer (2020) in April 2020 declared, “Schools are closed, but learning can and should continue!” Within weeks educational policies and plans had to be implemented for the commencement of teaching and learning. The unfamiliar form of online education has put in place a new digital delivery model of education, (Zhang *et al.*, 2020:3). The development of educational platforms, as mentioned in the previous section, availed opportunities for South African learners to remain in an educational environment whether over radio, television or online learning platforms, depending on accessibility, at a time when face-to-face pedagogy was not allowed (Motshekga, 2020a). As mentioned above there are still disparities regarding distribution and accessibility of resources. This also applies to access to internet and the media platforms mentioned here. Thus while some school possessed the means to fund their own online systems to distribute lessons and work to their learners; other schools could hardly continue with schooling pedagogy because of a lack of personal funds or assistance from the government (Gustafsson & Nuga, 2020; Amnesty International, 2021:17).

Currently, the Covid-19 coronavirus continues to be a threatening pandemic, and strict curfews and regulations are followed in numerous countries across the world to prohibit the spread of the virus. Although methods are put in place to combat Covid-19, there is no certainty whether or not future lockdown periods will follow. Therefore, considering the most effective modes for continuing education through distance learning is necessary.

2.4 Specific context

The specific context of this thesis pertains to high school art education. The study was focused on the educators' perspectives of their learners and the effect of play on their art practices. Three educators were participants in the study. The sampling of participants and methods of collecting data for the study is expounded on later in this thesis (see Chapter 4). Although more educators were approached to take part in the study, only three accepted the invitation. The three participants who took part in the study are all visual arts educators for high schools in the Western Cape of South Africa, in the City of Cape Town and Winelands areas. Two of these schools (those of P2 and P3) are located in middle to high income areas while the other school is situated in an area of generally middle to low income households (This is merely a generalisation, as there are learners of various different backgrounds and circumstances in all three schools) (Western Cape Government, 2016:17). All three participants teach at public schools. The schools where P2 and P3 are educators at are Afrikaans medium schools and P1 teaches at a predominantly English school with roughly a third of the learners speaking Afrikaans. The schools of participants P2 and P3 have approximately 1000 learners in each and that of P1 has almost double the number of learners, about 1900 learners. The sizes of the classes vary because of the number of learners in the school; this is also due to the way art is perceived/ valued in the specific communities. All three participants teach art for all grades, from grade 8 till 12.

Educator P3 was the oldest participant, teaching high school art the longest. P3 mentioned during the interview that they taught "on and off, about 26 years" thus far (taking a break by teaching extracurricular art classes before returning to teach high school art). P2 also mentioned teaching for 11 years and P1 for 5 years. Furthermore, all three participants are female and Caucasian, consequently the views recorded in this dissertation are subjective to Caucasian female high school art educators. Perhaps the study would have benefited from a more diverse group of participants. However, after extending invitations to a diverse group of people, only these three educators were able to participate in the study.

As the researcher of this study, I am familiar with the one school, since I was a high school learner there and participant P2 from this school taught visual arts to me during my high school experience. Participant P1 and I are acquainted through mutual friends, which allowed for comfortable and honest discussions during the interview. I also did service learning as part of the course work for this Master's degree with P1 and P2, through which I gained first-hand experience of some points mentioned by the participants in the interviews and workshop.⁴ It was also brought to my attention that all three participants know about each other or have previously met, before the online group workshop where they saw each other virtually.

2.5 Synthesis

It is understood that the main contextual aspects informing this study are the following: the South African context, especially with its segregated past and the development of education over the years to include aspects of digital pedagogy today. The second context is that of online, distance learning widely implemented due to Covid-19. Both the context of South Africa and the Covid-19 pandemic relate to the research for this study, as it indirectly affects the focus concept of play in South African high school art education. The history of South Africa has shaped and developed South African education to what it is in a democratic South Africa today. Furthermore, the advent of Covid-19 accelerated the development of digital pedagogy in South Africa to facilitate the continuation of teaching and learning during a lockdown period and its aftermath. The three participants are of the same gender and race yet are of different age groups. The schools they teach at are in separate areas of the Western Cape, the sizes of the schools and the demographic of the areas vary.

In the following chapter the theoretical perspectives pertaining to play and the broader concept of high school art education are discussed.

⁴ However this practical teaching time took place outside of the research time for this thesis, thus observations during that time may not form part of the data collection for the study.

Chapter 3: Theoretical perspectives

3.1 Introduction

The theoretical underpinnings of this study engage with the influence of play on the development of learners and the presence of play in the high school visual art pedagogy. The effects of play on creativity, making art and critical thinking are addressed. The understanding of 'play' for the purposes of this study pertains to creative or artistic play, the experimentation and exploration of mediums, materials, techniques and freedom and curiosity when making or creating without necessarily having a clear or final idea for an artwork in mind. Therefore, the theoretical perspectives captured in this chapter comprise of the importance of art in school and the influence of art on society, the theory of play, this play-approach specifically in visual arts, and how play impacts critical thinking.

3.2 The importance of art in education and society

As the following section will attest, play, and thus art, has beneficial implications for all human beings and our holistic development. This section specifically examines art in education and further – the importance of the arts in society.

3.2.1 Arts in education

School helps to shape the minds of learners (Eisner, 1992:592). According to Eisner (1992:594) one of the most important lessons art can teach is that there could be many different solutions to a problem. Imagination, variety of perspectives and individual interpretation is celebrated in the arts (Eisner, 1992:594). However, according to Karkou and Glasman (2004:57), art in school is largely about “equipping young people with knowledge, skills and appreciation of the separate art forms, and they are taught within a designated, and some would argue limited, number of teaching hours”. Art, specifically in high schools, is often focussed on realistic interpretation, often there are rigid rubrics and limited time, because educators need

to assess the work and give marks. This all hinders play in the making process. The assessment of art further puts pressure on learners because they do not want to make mistakes. Karkou and Glasman (2004:57) support “child-centred education” that highlights self-expression, emotional development and self-actualisation as the main aims of the educational process. Eisner (1992:595) also promotes expression and discovery as two major aspects of human development toward which the arts make a contribution.

This sense of discovery that forms part of art subjects also helps to promote critical thinking and the ability to interpret the world around us (The TATE gallery, 2018). The TATE Gallery encourages participation in the arts and promotes the importance of art subjects in school on their website. This is in accordance to the Tracking Arts Engagement and Learning (TALE) study undertaken from 2016 till 2018 – a three-year research project investigating arts education in high schools in England (The TATE gallery, 2018). The TATE Gallery (2018) proposes that art improves students’ self-expression and creativity, as well as confidence in their identity. The study shows that creativity can help with the holistic wellbeing of learners and improve health and happiness – learners commented that “arts lessons acted as an outlet for releasing the pressures of studying as well as those of everyday life” (The TATE gallery, 2018). Karkou and Glasman (2004:58) came to a similar finding in their study and declare that the art educator can have a profound impact through addressing learners’ personal needs and supporting their development. When the arts are used appropriately, it “can contribute towards the personal wellbeing and social integration of school students” and the “capacity of children/ young people to learn and achieve can be facilitated and ultimately strengthened” (ibid.).

Some findings pertaining to art in school in the TALE study include: almost 50% of the participating students identified school as having a substantial impact on their engagement with the arts (Thomson, Hall, Earl, & Geppert, 2018). According to the study, a significant number of students, about 36%, only engage with the arts at school (Thomson, *et al.*, 2018:5). Therefore, as hardly any art activities are pursued outside of school, the inclusion of art in school becomes all the more important. The learners also noted that encouragement from their teachers or family would increase their engagement in art activities (ibid.).

In the last decade, the understanding of the value of arts in education and the whole of society has changed considerably towards emphasising the advantages of the arts for social inclusion (Karkou & Glasman, 2004:57). However, Karkou and Glasman (2004:58) argue that this, however, is largely supported by the agenda to protect economic prosperity. To grasp the importance of art in a school context, the influence and importance of art in society should also be addressed. These reasons for art forming part of school subjects and the benefits thereof for learners could also pertain to society at large.

3.2.2 Arts in society

According to author and philosopher Alain de Botton (2013) art can be used as a tool to enforce change in a person's thoughts, emotions or mind-set. Many theorists and artists believe that art does not need function or purpose and perhaps making art should be "for art's sake" as proclaimed in the 19th century.⁵ De Botton⁶ (2013), however, argues that it should not be surprising or strange for art to be purposeful, since artworks offer us hope and validate our sorrows, they teach us new things and help us understand ourselves; they inspire and rebalance us and stir new appreciation for the familiar. Artworks can remind us of what matters most in our lives (De Botton, 2013). With all these attributes ascribed to the arts, one realises the influence art can have on both the artist and the viewer. Art, in the making or experiencing thereof, can thus have a significant impact on the emotional or mental wellbeing of a person. Art also has a broader impact on society, the economy and politics.

The thinking and creativity of artists are shaped by their circumstances and experiences, which include the events in their country (Klopper, 2013:138). Klopper (2013) explains how art has been used for political gain in the history of South Africa, and in the world. Here the message that the artwork conveys often becomes more

⁵ In the 1800's the term "art for art's sake" was introduced the arts (Oxford Reference, 2020). This type of art was seen as distanced from emotional or utilitarian functions and rather thought to be morally neutral and self-sufficient. Art needs no purpose but to be pursued for its beauty or aesthetics.

⁶ De Botton's book *Art as Therapy* (2013) introduces the idea of art as a tool to help us with our most intimate struggles.

important than the aesthetics or skill of creating the work. Art similarly is all the more used to promote and market products, businesses and social causes. According to Marciszewska and Marciszewski (2021:748), visual arts play a dual role in Society 5.0, firstly becoming an instrument in marketing communication and, secondly playing a role in “shaping the recipients’ attitudes toward social and economic processes”. Society 5.0 is “a human-centered society that balances economic advancement with the resolution of social problems by a system that highly integrates cyberspace and physical space,” (Marciszewska & Marciszewski, 2021:749). Marciszewska and Marciszewski argue that visual art plays an important part through its aesthetic, persuasive, and communicative functions and, even more, through shaping attitudes, social interactions, and behaviours. “Therefore a challenge for the constructors of the new economic and social order will be to recognize visual arts’ ability to create emotions and experiences and target, influence, and shape market relations on the one hand and social attitudes on the other” (Marciszewska & Marciszewski 2021:749).

3.3 Play theory

In this study play is focused on in the context of art education. However, to fully grasp the concept of play in art, one first has to engage with the type of play that a young child takes part in daily. Play has always been a part of human behaviour (Sandberg & Heden, 2011:317). It is “pleasurable to play” according to Sandberg and Heden (2011:318) and stirs feelings of joy, passion and creativity in the one practising it. Play makes learners happy (Engel, 2015:324). It has been found that open-ended play is beneficial to the whole being of a learner, physically, socially/ emotionally and cognitively (Huisman, 2014:466; Westraadt, 2011:158).

Play and playfulness continue as part of one’s life despite maturing from a child to an adult (Power, 2011:298). Being playful can create possibilities for practical creativity and generate a more adaptable, optimistic, and creative outlook on life. Power (2011:319) states that it is the embodied mind’s expression of cheerfulness and optimism on account of its own versatility, because playfulness is stimulating, enthusiastic, and transformative. In a scientific context, Power (2011:299) argues that playfulness is “both dopamine driven as an emotional impulse—a wanting to

play—and opioid rewarded as a pleasurable feeling”. He explains that dopamine sparks curiosity, novelty and flexible response patterns and opioids stimulate positive moods. These aspects correspond greatly with characteristics of playfulness (Power, 2011:299). Power (2011:300-314) identifies eight qualities of playfulness with the potential to enhance creativity. It is dynamic, interactive, enigmatic, light-hearted, humorous, imaginative, open-minded, and transformative.

Claxton (2000:193) mentions ‘soft creativity’ as authenticating the creative process. The phases from starting with a project’s initial ideas till the completion of the task is kept and taken note of. The process of coming to the end product is acknowledged. Perhaps in the significance of the process, play also finds its weighted impact.

As a teacher, Engel (2015:324) testifies of the life skills the learners develop through group play, such as problem solving, role-play, reflecting real-world scenarios and sharing. Play is integral to some schools and forms part of the foundation of their pedagogy. Waldorf schools promote play as a way to enhance a learner’s health and well-being (Sobo, 2014:9). Waldorf schools aim to develop holistically healthy learners and play is seen as the primary means of doing so (Sobo, 2014:10). The school curriculum is rich in arts and culture and does not follow a structured, mainly theoretical schooling approach. Huisman (2014:467), as well as Vickerius and Sandberg (2004), argue that structured activities take away from creative problem solving through play. There should, however, be opportunity for the educator to support and guide the learners, but also for letting them explore and find their own way in play (Sandberg & Heden, 2011:328). Through finding one’s own way decisions have to be made through reasoning and individual choices. Thus according to Sandberg and Heden (2011:318) play also contributes to the forming of identity and the self.

3.3.1 Play approach in visual art

After identifying the benefits of play for the development or growth of learners, as well as the position of art in education and society at large, these two notions are aligned in order to introduce a play-approach in visual art and visual art education.

Art historian, Daniel Siedell (2008) argues that “art does something to and with the self, projecting an imaginative world of thought in aesthetic form that is necessary for human development”. Art serves as a means to envision an alternative reality to that which we know – realising our faults and extending hope for the future. Siedell (2008) claims the problem with art is that “we think we know what art is”, therefore there is a popular misconception among the public that art should only be recognisable and understandable. Art, however, is a dynamic unification of “form and content” (Siedell, 2008). There is a connection between the outward form of the work and the inner feeling or imagination of the artist or viewer. Siedell (2008) explains the difference between representational art and abstract art as “representational art requires imaginative projection” while “abstract art requires representation of some kind”. Both art forms require representation to inform meaning, yet these representations vary. Siedell (2008) reminds that art is mysterious - “at once infinitely complex yet at times staggeringly simple.” We cannot attempt to understand everything about art, the making, viewing or affect thereof. I agree with Jensen (2004:3) that “we are slightly or significantly different for having...paid attention” to an artwork. Yet intentional engagement with the artwork is required for the difference or change to come about in an individual.

“The work of art – by which I now mean the act of creation – does not follow an unalterable schedule but is a journey that unfolds” (Eisner, 1992:594). Eisner (1992:594) argues that having fixed objectives and pursuing definite methods for achieving them are not the most “rational ways of dealing with the world.” He (1992:595) states that the point of schooling is to prepare a learner for life, yet the problems of life are not fixed and would require different perspectives/ problem solving/ insight to be overcome. Hence, he suggests that art would much better “prepare” a learner for life than many other means. Eisner (1992:594) relates the problems of life to that of an artist; “the arts teach that goals need to be flexible and that surprise counts”. Art loves chance and stirs insight through the unanticipated and “purposeful flexibility rather than rigid adherence to prior plans is more likely to yield something of value”. Making art “becomes the most precious evidence of freedom” (Reddy, 1998:105).

In speaking of the marvel and wonder of beginning to learning through art, Reddy (1998:99,102,105) states:

We have developed a profound sense of wonder and curiosity. We have the capacity to enquire, to learn the true nature of the objects we perceive, to enter into the depths of what lies behind them; to learn, to find enlightenment, to live.

In order to observe clearly one needs to be free to look – free from memories ideas, conclusions, and beliefs interfering between one and the world

Reddy (1998:99) describes the artist as engaging and scouring the moments of marvel and wonder to ultimately transmit insight through the mysterious source of reality – the art-making process combines creativity and learning and Reddy submits that it has a “great deal to do with emotional life as it springs from the depths of man’s spiritual nature.” Learning through play and the arts, furthermore “illuminates what is most subtle, and penetrates it most significantly” (Reddy, 1998:99).

With a playful approach, any task can become play (West, Hoff & Carlson, 2016:72). According to West, Hoff and Carlson (2016:73) describing a work task as play instead of work increases creativity for that project. Although the West *et al.* (2016) study is centred on the influence of play in a professional workspace or organisation, I believe the findings can also reveal the impact play has on creativity and productivity in art education. The conclusion is that playfulness increases and promotes a creative and productive environment in the workspace (West, *et al.*, 2016:83). In relating these findings to art education, I infer that the contribution of play in art making processes involves a playfulness that enhances creativity of ideas and productivity in the production thereof.

In fact, according to Belluigi (2009:703), the importance of play is very significant in art making. Here ‘play’ does not refer to “non-serious endeavours” but rather “playing with, trying out, discarding identity, purpose, shape” (Parker, 2003:541 in Belluigi, 2009:703). Thus creativity requires active engagement by artists in forming, creating and interpreting what they are doing and, through this, they gain a sense of the self (Belluigi, 2009:703). Belluigi (*ibid.*) attests that reflexive practice between creativity and critical thinking is required for making art and that schools should create environments conducive to developing both skills. However, Belluigi (*ibid.*) also states that such play can only be effective in conditions of trust and acceptance, therefore “art education is ideally intended to be experienced with enough time and allowance for students to explore”. In order to extend their limits, space is also

required for uncertainty, maturation and critical reflection, with a pedagogy that facilitates open possibilities and collaboration and that “values process as much as product” (Belluigi, 2009:703).

The rapid increase in distance learning (because of the Covid-19 pandemic) again changed the course of visual art education, at least temporarily, although many aspects of distance learning are likely to continue in the future. There has been an immense challenge in online learning for the arts and other practical school subjects, because learners did not necessarily have the resources at home to create artworks, record drama/ music performances, do science experiments, etc. Schäfer, (2020) the Minister of education for the Western Cape, encouraged South Africans to view the lockdown of 2020 as a time of growth in the education sector, saying: “May we embrace this challenge as we look at new ways to communicate and collaborate, and to stimulate critical thinking by ways and means that are creative in this lockdown period”. Critical thinking indeed is stirred when creative solutions of any kind are to be accomplished. I propose that play, as defined in this thesis, and art practices in general also stimulate creative and critical thinking.

3.3.2 Critical thinking theory

According to Johnson and Morris (2010:77), countries around the world are increasingly advocating ‘critical’ citizenship in the planned curricula of schools. The last two decades have brought many reform measures in school systems in order to “reorient and/or strengthen the role of citizenship education” (Johnson & Morris, 2010:77). Originally, the primary role of citizenship or civic education was tied to state formation processes and “designed to build a common identity” and increase “patriotism and loyalty to the nation” (Johnson & Morris, 2010:77). In recent years however, citizenship education has been expected to achieve much more complex purposes that, according to Johnson and Morris (2010:77), introduce “changing conceptions of what it means to be a good citizen.” In some cases, citizenship education is further expected to promote social justice and democracy (Johnson & Morris, 2010:78). Citizenship curricula furthermore, are expected to “encourage citizens to be ‘critical’” and hence promote critical citizenship that, on the one hand, desires to ensure obedience and on the other, to ensure creativity and critical

thinking in citizens (Johnson & Morris, 2010:78). The importance of achieving the latter, according to Johnson and Morris (ibid.) “has been reinforced greatly by the instrumental desire of states to strengthen their competitiveness in the global economy, which is seen to require a more innovative, independent, creative and reflective workforce.”

Classification as “exploring, developing, evaluating and making choices” is often associated with critical thinking (Johnson & Morris, 2010:78). Paul, (2005:28) explains that critical thinking has three interrelated phases; firstly analysing thinking, then assessing it and, thirdly, improving it. Creative thinking is especially related to the third phase. Thereby Paul (2005:28) claims that creative thinking is “a natural by-product of critical thinking, precisely because analysing and assessing thinking enables one to raise it to a higher level—to recreate it, as it were”. Art education could clearly benefit from engaging more with critical thinking. Moeller, Cutler, Fiedler and Weier (2013:60) also state that visual thinking strategies, or creative thinking, encourage learners to “re-evaluate their thinking after hearing others”. Instead of dismissing an idea, one should rather carefully consider the options before drawing conclusions. With play in art education, it is therefore important to consider your own processes and work as well as that of your peers, and then learning from it.

There are also disputes in literature as to the differences between creative thinking and critical thinking. Creative and critical thinking could seem to be opposing forms of thought (Paul & Elder 2006:34). Paul and Elder (ibid.) separate them as follows; “the first [creative thinking] based on irrational or unconscious forces, the second [critical thinking] on rational and conscious processes; the first undirectable and unteachable, the second directable and teachable”. I agree with Paul and Elder that creative and critical thinking perhaps seem contradictory at first, but I would suggest these two schools of thought are well matched to form a comprehensive way of thinking, both in the arts and in life, with creative thinking allowing for free thinking and exploring different ideas and critical thinking honing in on some of those notions, analysing and deciphering it. According to Paul and Elder (2006:34), teaching creative and critical thinking simultaneously requires focussing on these terms in “practical, everyday contexts; keeping their central meanings in mind; and seeking insight into how they overlap and interact with one another”.

Belluigi (2009:700) writes about a study by The Five Colleges of Ohio (2007) which identified “improvement in critical thinking by the assessment of arguments and understanding the perspectives of others, and in creative thinking by risk, novelty and curiosity”. Students should learn to “think their way through content” and adopt the thinking of their subjects (Paul & Elder, 2008:32). According to Paul (2005:33) educators need to understand critical thinking substantively and then teach their students the tools of critical thinking.

Belluigi (2009:700) states that it is the educators’ responsibility to encourage such thinking, skills and habits and create the space for this. Belluigi (2009:703) furthermore argues that, for critical and creative skills to develop for art students, “play” is necessary, and play is only possible in “a context of trust and acceptance”. “For this reason, art education is ideally intended to be experienced ... with enough time and allowance for students to explore their aims and extend their limits, with the ‘space’ for play, uncertainty, maturation and critical reflection.” (Belluigi, 2009:703). Play in high school art education requires thinking in a creative manner in order to solve creative problems (Smith, 2019). Thus Belluigi (ibid.) encourages a pedagogic approach that “is facilitating, enabling, responsive, open to possibilities, and collaborative, and which values process as much as product.” Creativity in students is promoted by “supportive, student-centred environments that value divergence and diversity; encourage playfulness, risk-taking and experimentation; and, important in this context, assessment practices that focus on positive feedback and diagnostic evaluation” (Belluigi, 2009:715). Educators have the power to design activities and assignments to foster critical thinking and creativity.

De Klerk (2020:836) contends that educators should be critical people attempting to enhance society. De Klerk (ibid.) acknowledges that “inequalities in education are problems that will always be with us in one form or another but contends that in-service educators can be capacitated to guide learners in analysing systemic inequity in their classroom settings.” The role of the educator is undoubtedly influential in creating an environment for enhancing learners’ thinking and development (Moeller *et al.*, 2013:60; Belluigi, 2009:700).

3.4 Synthesis

This chapter discussed the concept of play as an approach to making art in education. The importance of art in school was discussed as well as its position in broader society. There was mention of the influences of play on the holistic development of learners and specifically on their artistic abilities and critical thinking. The presence of play in visual art practices and within art education was examined. The combination of theories and investigations discussed in this chapter all relates to play as part of high school visual art education and the possible benefits thereof for the learners.

The next chapter delineates the research methodology for the study of high school art educators' perspectives on play in their classrooms.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Mouton (2001) and Bryman (2012) argue that knowledge is gathered through experience, whereby new factual discoveries are made or previous hypotheses confirmed. An outline of the research methodology for this study follows. This is an empirical research study as the experiences, observations and interpretations of educators are central to the study in this research. The research methodology is further explained in the following sections: research paradigm, approach, design, data collection and data analysis, as well as the ethics, validity and trustworthiness of the study.

4.2 Type of Study

The type of study, regarding the research paradigm, research approach and the research design, is discussed in the following sub-sections.

4.2.1 Research Paradigm

The study was based on the experiences of educators and their personal and professional understandings and analyses. Meaning was derived from their individual points of view, hence an interpretivist paradigm was required (Bryman, 2012:179). The interpretivist paradigm considers the various realities of participants as informed by their backgrounds, worldviews and experiences (Bryman, 2012:30). A relativist ontology was applied additionally, whereby understanding is formed by the subjective experiences of the participants.

4.2.2 Research approach

The study made use of qualitative research since people's opinions and experiences were recorded as data for the study. Qualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2012:380; Mouton, 2001:149). The study followed an inductive approach. The inductive research approach corresponds to the relationship between

theory and research, in which the theory is generated from the research (Bryman, 2012:712). Thus, specific observations from the data lead to general principles about the research (Babbie, 2010:23).

4.2.3 Research Design

The research design for this study took the form of a case study. Case studies are regularly used with qualitative research that aims to do an in-depth investigation of a small group of participants (Mouton, 2001:149). A case study can capture a range of responses from multiple participants (Mouton, 2001:149-150; Bryman, 2012:66; Schwandt & Gates, 2010:346).

Schwandt and Gates (2010) indicate different types of, and uses for case studies. A descriptive case study was used for the purposes of this research model. The aim of the descriptive case study is to gain a complete/whole view of a phenomenon and gain insight from people's worldviews, experiences and perspectives (Schwandt & Gates, 2010:346). Focusing on description also involves identifying commonalities, yet avoiding generalisation (Schwandt & Gates, 2010:347). The case study design of this study hence includes information/insight from a selection of art educators; gaining detailed responses from each that will inevitably depict differences in their experiences but also possible commonalities in their evaluations.

4.3 Sampling and Data Collection

The following sub-sections discuss how participants were selected for the study and the specification for collecting the data.

4.3.1 Sampling of participants

The focus of the study was specifically on high school art educators from the Western Cape, South Africa. The Western Cape, specifically the City of Cape Town and Cape Winelands regions were chosen as the field of study because I was raised in Cape Town and currently reside in Stellenbosch. There are personal connections to the areas and an understanding of their contexts.

A small sampling size was used, because of the time constraints of the study and also to include detailed responses from the participants. However, with a small sampling size, I acknowledge that a limited number of perspectives are recorded in the study and sampling bias could occur. Consequently, I was vigilant about sampling bias and included participants from three different schools in order to gain perspectives based in the contexts of three different schools (Bryman 2012:188).

The study made use of non-probability sampling since specific schools/educators were approached on the basis of previous knowledge of the school and ties to the school – I was a learner at one of the approached schools and am acquainted with the art educator at another school (Bryman, 2012:418). Other schools were invited on the basis of referrals and further schools within the specific sampling field were selected. Fourteen schools were invited to take part in the study (for the invitation sent by email, see Addendum D). The participants who finally formed part of the study were subject to the availability and willingness of the approached parties. Five schools accepted the invitation and thus permission from the principals were requested before commencing with the ethical clearance⁷ process (template permission letter in Addendum C). One art educator from each school was contacted to participate in the study. However, when it came to data collection, only three of the initial five educators responded to my emails and became part of my study. As a result, three art educators, each from a different school in the Western Cape, participated in the collection of data.

The three participants all teach at public schools where some form of creative arts (whether dance, drama, music, visual art) are mandatory in grades 8 and 9, after which visual arts is a possible chosen subject from grade 10 onward. All three participants teach visual art from grade 8 till 12. The number of learners per class thus differs according to the popularity of art as a choice among the learners of a specific year group. The number of learners in a class is also subject to the number of learners in the schools. The school at which participant P1 teaches is significantly larger than the other two schools. This school has approximately 400 learners per grade while each of the others has more or less 200 learners per grade.

⁷ More about the ethical clearance process follows in section 4.5.

4.3.2 Data Collection

Data collection took the form of interviews and a short workshop with the participants. The primary source for the collection of data was semi-structured interviews of 35 to 45 minutes, conducted individually with each participant. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016:147), qualitative research often relies on interviews for data collection. Interviews allow the researcher to achieve in-depth insight from the participants with regard to the research topic (Marshall & Rossman, 2016:148). Qualitative interviewing tends to be flexible to allow the interviewee to elaborate on and emphasize aspects of the topic they find most important or intriguing (Bryman, 2012:470). A semi-structured interview involves intentional prepared questions that are put to all participants but also allow unforeseen discussion or elaboration by the participants.

Some of the questions that were discussed include (see Addendum B):

- What do you think are the effects of artistic play in the art classroom?
- In your classroom, how have you noticed creative/artistic play forming part of the learner's art-making processes?
- What do you think is keeping your learners from approaching art making with a sense of play?
- How has the shift to online learning impacted the learners' artworks, artistic abilities and sense of play?
- What do you think can be done to improve play in high school art education (with online and in-person pedagogy)?

The interviews were conducted with the objective of gaining an educator's perspective on play in art education, finding out what their experience with play in the classroom has been and how this has changed since the sudden shift to online learning in 2020. Questions pertaining to online learning formed part of the study to gain insight as to what worked and what did not work with virtual art education and how according to the educator this affected their learners' artistic abilities and creative play. A consent form (see Addendum A) was signed by each participant before conducting the interviews.

The interviews were conducted in accordance with the South African Government's Covid-19 regulations in force at the time. Marshall and Rossman (2016:148) explain that the understanding of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee is based on "respect, interest, attention and good manners". Qualitative research interviews are usually face-to-face because of the personal nature of such discussions (Bryman, 2012:471). However, because of the on-going pandemic, digital meeting platforms, email and WhatsApp were used for all communication and Zoom was used for the interviews and workshop. The interviews and the workshop were conducted in Afrikaans, by request from the participants and were recorded with my mobile phone voice recorder in order to analyse the data later. The recordings were stored on my personal laptop as well as on an external hard drive.

The online 'play' workshop formed part of the data collection; here play was explored as a means of art education. The aim of the workshop was to conduct an engaging, interactive session during which the participants could gain ideas regarding play that they would be able to incorporate in their own classrooms in the future. The workshop ran for 50 to 60 minutes in total and transpired digitally, via Zoom. Since it was an online workshop, I could not provide art materials for the participants. Yet any available materials could be used, e.g., scrap paper with any drawing medium, or found materials, etc. for the purpose of the workshop, thus the participant was not inconvenienced by buying additional supplies. The participants were asked to keep the following material at hand for the workshop: three pieces of scrap paper, two or more implements for making marks/drawing and any random object or material.

I shared play methods from my own experience as an art student as well as from further research during the workshop, and allowed participants to attempt some of these methods (see Addendum E). Not all the play activity ideas spoken about were executed in the workshop because of limited time and resources. Four activities were attempted during the workshop, with mention of other methods of play as well as discussing the possible influence that play could introduce in the classroom. We commenced the workshop with a quick drawing that had to be completed in a few seconds and was followed by gestural drawing with large arm/body movements to loosen the body and imagination. The third activity involved a hypothetical project in which the participants had to think of words and ideas associated with the topic, namely 'green' in this exercise. The objective was to compile a comprehensive list of

ideas in order to do away with the problem of being stuck with only one initial project idea and not allowing exploration of other options. Then more experimental play methods were introduced. I explained how one material, for example foil, can be used in as many different ways as one can imagine. It could be the surface on which art is made; it could become a utensil for applying paint; it could be torn, folded, scrunched to form different textures, and so on. Something that is not usually deemed an art material thereby, gains new uses or meaning. The participants were then encouraged to use a material, medium or tool (easily accessible and at their disposal) that they had seldom or ever used before when making art. With this material they were allowed to play; combining materials or mediums to form a new technique or a new art medium and a new creation.

Although one could reach a 'final' artwork for a project through play, I personally have found that the time of play most often leads to a 'final' idea which is then pursued to create the artwork. Writing down various ideas and phrases becomes part of this process of play. The participants were given one word, 'green', and then asked to write down all the words they associated with that word. This made it possible to identify how everyone's thought patterns relating to that one word differed and how diverse the outcomes of a project could be if implemented with learners. The workshop was semi-structured, allowing the educators to share their insights or further ideas regarding the topic of play. The participants also embraced the opportunity to learn from each other.

4.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative data can be analysed using content analysis. Content analysis is a systematic and objective approach to describe data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008:107). According to Elo and Kyngäs (ibid.) content analysis allows the researcher to examine theoretical issues to enhance their understanding of the data. Data is broken down into codes or indexes and categorised according to links or patterns observed in the data (Bryman, 2012:575). These categories are then organised and grouped under headings and these are grouped further, thus reducing the number of headings (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Through interpretation the researcher decides what to put in the same category. This process is inductive content analysis and has the

purpose of increasing understanding and generating knowledge (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008:109).

The recordings of the interviews as well as the group workshop with the participants were analysed using inductive content analysis to identify and categorise themes and sub-themes that are discussed in the next chapter.

4.5 Ethical Considerations and Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure the integrity of the research study, the ethical rules of the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of Stellenbosch University were adhered to. REC approval was obtained before data collection commenced. All participants were required to sign consent forms to indicate their willingness to be recorded before the interviews took place. They were made aware of the nature of the study and all the ethical aspects considered, as well as the option to withdraw from the study with no negative effect to themselves (Addendum A). The confidentiality of the participants was also taken into account as their identities are kept confidential in the published form of the research, namely this thesis. The names of the participants are not revealed in this thesis as a coding system was implemented to distinguish the participants' responses, such as Participant 1 [P1]. The names of the schools are also not mentioned in the research study.

The interviews and workshop were recorded (audio only) on my mobile phone and laptop, both of which are password protected. Photographs of the workshop activities were willingly shared by the participants and are securely stored along with the recordings. Once the data was collected it was organised and filed on my laptop and the data backed up on my personal external hard drive. The external drive is locked in a cupboard in my home. Only I, the researcher, and, if needed, my research supervisor have access to the data. All the participant data will be erased within a year after the thesis is concluded.

The four criteria for qualitative data to be considered valid and trustworthy, according to Guba and Lincoln (in Bryman, 2012:390-393; Marshall & Rossman, 2016:46) are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility relates to the representation of reality in the findings. To ensure credibility the research findings were made available to the participants per request via email, for them to review the conclusions that were drawn (Marshall & Rossman, 2016:46).

Transferability entails “thick description”, an intensive study of the culture or group of people researched so as to believably convey the findings in context (Bryman, 2012:392). For this study the South African context was sensitively considered and depicted as accurately as possible. Online learning since the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic also received serious consideration in the context of this study. The context of high school art classrooms was the main focus of the study, however, despite the small sample size.

Dependability, according to Guba and Lincoln (in Bryman, 2012:392), requires an “auditing approach” to ensure that complete records are kept at all stages of research and data collection. The research should be consistent and organised should the study or aspects thereof are to be repeated.

Confirmability is concerned with the objectivity of the study. While a researcher inherently includes a personal view in a study, personal values and theories should not sway the process of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016:46). When copying data from recordings, I therefore made sure that the information was reflected as truthfully to the expressions of the participants as possible.

4.6 Synthesis

This chapter contains a discussion of the methodology for this study. A case study research design for conducting qualitative research, by means of interviews and a workshop was employed. Inductive content analysis was used to draw themes from the collected data. These themes are identified and discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Data and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The understanding of 'play' for the purpose of this study has already been explicated as creative or artistic experimentation, exploration of mediums, materials and techniques; the freedom of and curiosity about making or creating without necessarily having a clear or final idea for an artwork in mind. This chapter analyses the incorporation of play in high school art, what that entails and what the impact of such play is on the learners in relation to the findings from the data of the empirical study. The chapter ends with a synthesis of the main findings from data obtained during the discussions.

5.2 Presentation and discussion of findings

The presentation and discussion of the findings are ordered as follows: The first theme (5.2.1) relates to the effects of play on high school art learners. Sub-themes related to this main theme are (5.2.1.1) how play can influence the confidence of learners and (5.2.1.2) the impact of play on the holistic wellbeing of learners. The second theme (5.2.2) concerns factors that prevent learners from engaging in play, with the sub-themes, (5.2.2.1) fear and (5.2.2.2) time. Thirdly (5.2.3), the educator's role in facilitating play is addressed with reference to the school art curriculum (5.2.3.1) as sub-theme. The last theme (5.2.4) has to do with the activation of play in both the practical (5.2.4.1) and theoretical (5.2.4.2) components.

5.2.1 Impact of play on learners

There are various advantages to incorporating play in high school visual art. Some of the effects of play on the learners were mentioned in the individual interviews with the participants as well as during the group workshop, and these factors are discussed below.

A well-known quote by artist Pablo Picasso reads *“Every child is an artist. The problem is to remain an artist once they grow up”*⁸ (Welch, 2021:240). Two participants coincidentally referred to this statement in relation to play in high school art. Educator P2 commented: *“As Picasso said, everyone can draw when they are young but at some stage one loses it – I think it’s the same with play. When you’re young you have a natural inclination and desire for experimenting and playing.”*⁹ P1 remarked: *“Picasso said; every child is an artist, they just grow up ... and those learners are supposed to play.”*¹⁰ The participants noted how precious play is to a child and that play, just like making art, should not diminish in high school or when growing up. Power (2011:298) argues that elements of play are present in numerous aspects throughout one’s life. It is not limited to child’s play or restricted to a certain age group. Play is applicable and relevant to high school visual art learners and their art-making processes.

Participant P2 explained a recent implementation of play with a matric class. The educator took the learners outside on the school premises where they collected objects to bring back to class, took photographs of things that intrigued them and spent time to look intently at shape, form, colour. The effect of play was immediately visible in the learners. P2 described it as *“unbelievable”*¹¹ and added that *“There is liveliness and an alertness that ... really, you don’t [usually] see it in the class”*.¹² West, Hoff and Carlson’s (2016:83) study found that incorporating playfulness in the workplace or as here in the classroom, the creativity and productivity of the employees or learners are increased.

P2 elaborated on the effects of play on the learners:

I tell you it’s as if an on switch is turned on and it was so much more vibrant and energetic and you can see the gears in the head, they are turning ... So, the on switch is turned on in the learners for sure and they are much more

⁸ According to Welch (2021:240), the quote is attributed to Pablo Picasso in *Time Magazine*, 4th October 1976.

⁹ “Soos Picasso wat gesê het almal kan teken as hulle jonk is, maar op ‘n stadium verloor mens dit – ek dink dis diesselfde met speel. As mens klein is dan het jy ‘n natuurlike ... aanleg of drang vir eksperimenteer en rondspeel.”

¹⁰ “Ek dink nou, Picasso het gesê: every child is an artist, they just grow up ... en ek dink daai kinders is suppose om te speel.”

¹¹ “Die effek is iets ongelooflik!”

¹² “Daar is ‘n lewendigheid en wakkerheid wat ... regtig, jy sien dit nie [gewoonlik] in die klas [nie].”

*awake and interested and there is a joy that is activated [through play] ... it is almost like just lighting a flame and immediately it's like something is switched on in their brains, and then you get more out of them ... So it's something I realise more and more, [play] is really very, very valuable.*¹³

Furthermore the participants mentioned that play activates the minds of the learners and hence they formulate more ideas related to their project. The participants added that learners sometimes only think of one idea and so limit their own creative process by not allowing themselves to explore further. After asking what influence play can have on the learners, P1 commented:

*I would say for the learners that [incorporate] play, it has a very positive outcome ... it's as if before they were literally only thinking inside the box and this [play] opens their thoughts – that's the main influence, it opens their minds ... and guide them to consider other possibilities, instead of this end product they work towards.*¹⁴

P3 remarked “[For] your weaker learner, that holds onto that pencil, if you help him a little to play then they develop, they see new possibilities and so on ... yes, definitely”.¹⁵ According to Eisner (1992:594) one of the most important lessons art can teach is that there could be numerous solutions to a problem. The comments from P1 and P3 mentioned above add to this statement as the educators suggested that play has the potential to broaden the possible outcomes of an art idea or even bring about completely new concepts through the process. Thus imagination, variety of perspectives and individual interpretation is celebrated in the arts (Eisner, 1992:594).

¹³ “Maar ek sê vir jou dis asof daar ‘n aan switch aangeskakel is en dit was soveel meer *vibrant* en energiek gewees; en jy kan sien, die ratte in die kop, dit draai.” ... “So, die aan *switch* is vir seker aan gesit in die kinders en hulle is baie meer wakker en stel belang en daars ‘n vrolikheid wat aktiveer [met speel].” ... “dit is amper soos om weer ‘n flammetjie net aan te steek want onmiddellik is dit asof iets aangaan in hulle breine, jy weet soos geactiveer word en dan kry ‘n mens meer uit hulle uit. ... So dis iets wat ek al hoe meer agterkom, [speel] is rerig baie baie waardevol.”

¹⁴ “ek sou sê; vir die kinders wat wel speel het dit ‘n baie positiewe uitwerking, ... want dis asof hulle dan van te vore letterlik nog net in ‘n boksie gedink het en dit maak hulle gedagtes oop – dis die main invloed, dit maak hulle gedagtes oop en ... *guide* hulle om ander alternatiewe te oorweeg, in plaas van hierdie eindproduk waarna toe hulle werk.”

¹⁵ “Die wat goed presteer is die wat so bietjie [self] aangaan, en jou swakker leerder wat vashou aan daai potlood, as jy hom so bietjie aanhelp om te speel dan ontwikkel hulle, hulle sien nuwe moontlikhede en so aan, ja definitief.”

This analysis supplements Eisner's (1992:592) statement that schooling helps to shape the minds of learners. I am of the opinion that play can cultivate critical thinking. Johnson and Morris (2010:78) ascribe "exploring, developing, evaluating and making choices" to critical thinking. These are all aspects present in play as well. Paul (2005:28) claims a person is a critical thinker when they frequently improve their thinking by studying and critiquing it. Paul (ibid.) notes that creative thinking, is "a natural by-product of critical thinking," and further states that "new and better thinking is the by-product of healthy critical thought". Art education could consequently benefit from engaging more with critical thinking and play cannot fully take place without such critical thinking.

Two other elements of play suggested by the participants in their individual interviews were, freedom to create and the importance of the process of making; not initially having an end goal in mind. P3 remarked that play to them means to "*experiment*" and "*being free*".¹⁶ When asked what they associate with the word 'play' in an art education context, P1 suggested the following: "*I think experimentation could be a word to describe it*".¹⁷ P2 shared the same sentiment indicating "*In a nutshell I would say if I hear that word 'play' in the context of art it is 'to experiment without reservation' – where you don't restrain yourself and that you're willing to see where the process leads you*".¹⁸ P1 continued, describing play by saying "*it's supposed to be a process where they [the learners] experiment with either material and or with their ideas to figure out the theme*".¹⁹

Eisner (1992:594) comments on the attribute of making freely by relating the problems of life to that of an artist; "the arts teach that goals need to be flexible and that surprise counts" – art loves chance and stirs insight through the unanticipated and that "purposeful flexibility rather than rigid adherence to prior plans is more likely to yield something of value." According to Reddy (1998:105), making art "becomes the most precious evidence of freedom".

¹⁶ "eksperimenteer; vry wees"

¹⁷ "ek dink 'eksperimenteer' kan 'n woord wees om dit te beskryf"

¹⁸ "as ek in 'n neutdop moet sê as ek daai woordjie 'speel' hoor in die konteks van kuns is dit 'sonder voorbehoud eksperimenteer' – waar jy jou nie terug hou nie en dat jy bereid is om amper te kyk waar die proses jou lei."

¹⁹ "dis versonderstel om 'n proses te wees waar hulle eksperimenteer met either materiaal en of met hulle idee ook en om die tema uit te *figure*"

P1 further mentioned:

If I can add to that, what I saw again now, we handed out the national exam to the matrices now ... and what I see now is the matrices' automatic reaction is like, okay they think about the theme and then they think about the final [artwork] the end product. And now I'm really trying to, only with the idea so far not on paper yet, to push them and say "play around a little with your different ideas, don't now get too attached to one thing, leave room for experimentation."²⁰

This process of play in a high school art context would be incorporated largely in the learners' journals/ visual diaries. The journal forms a great part of high school visual arts. The journal is where brainstorming, development of ideas, trials with a chosen medium and, hopefully, play takes place. During the workshop P1 asked the other participants, *"how do the rest of you do play in the visual diaries?"*²¹ To which P2 answered: *"keep open that it's optional [to include play experiments in the journal]" ... "some [learners] require more guidelines" ... "I sometimes do small activities in the class, so that there's something in their journals already" ... "I don't formally make [play] part of the journal."*²² P3 added: *"there are always learners that want to do it, but not everyone wants to do it in the book."*²³ The importance of the process is not just for journal purposes but for immersing in the experience and allowing play to take shape. It is in the process of planning and creating that play is mostly activated.

P1 and P3 commented how the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020 allowed some learners to implement play more in the making process or allowed some to be more engulfed in their making than in the normal school environment. P2 however stated that generally the learners in their art classes hardly progressed or continued with art

²⁰ "as ek by dit kan las, wat ek nou weer gesien het, ons het vir die matrieks hulle nationale eksamen vraestel nou uitgedeel ... wat ek ook net sien nou die matrieks se automatiese reaksie is so half, okay hulle dink oor die tema en dan dink hulle oor die finale, oor die eindproduk. En ek probeer nou rerig hulle sover net met die idee sover nog nie iets op papier, visual nie, maar om vir hulle te druk en te sê ... speel bietjie rond met jou verskillende idees, moenie nou te attached raak aan een ding nie, los ruimte vir eksperimentasie"

²¹ "hoe maak julle met speel in die visuele dagboek?"

²² "hou oop dat dit opsioneel is [om speel oefeninge in die journal te sit]" – "party meer riglyne nodig" "ek doen soms klein aktiwiteite in die klas so dan in daar reeds iets in hulle dagboeke" ... "ek maak dit [speel] nie formeel deel [van die joernaal] nie"

²³ "daar is altyd kinders wat dit wil doen, maar nie almal wil dit in die boek doen nie"

during the lockdown time. Educator P1 recalled that a learner embraced the lockdown period as an opportunity to experiment. P1 explained that this learner has by now probably shown the most progress and excitement about art among her peers because of taking the time to play and finding her voice and interests through the process. Hence P1 believes that the process of exploration and self-discovery through visual art builds confidence in the learners.

5.2.1.1 Confidence

In the individual interviews, P1 suggested that play could ultimately impart confidence in a learner:

... I also think in an ideal world, not that I have seen it, play can also give learners confidence; that they don't have to be drawing the perfect thing that leads to the next and the next, so they can first build up confidence – “wow, I just figured this thing out accidentally” vs. using a material perfectly.²⁴

Creative problem solving requires both guidance and one's own initiative. Sandberg and Heden (2011:328) are of the opinion that educators should support and guide their learners through play, yet permit them to explore and find their own way in play. Through navigating one's own path in play, decisions have to be made through reasoning and individual choices. Thus according to Sandberg and Heden (2011:318), play also contributes to the forming of identity and the self.

In our individual interview Educator P2 observed:

The result isn't that the learner should be worried about getting marks for this, because I think it's quite important that nothing can be wrong. They may take a chance. Because I think this is actually what you want to get the learners to when you include a play element – you are allowed to take a chance ... because many learners place pressure on themselves and they have extremely high standards and almost become anxious ... one can understand

²⁴ “Ja, maar ek dink ook, in 'n ideale wêreld, nie dat ek dit al gesien het nie, kan speel ook so half vir kinders *confidence* gee in dat hulle hoef nie nou 'n die perfekte ding te teken wat na die volgende ding lei en na die volgende nie, so hulle kan eers speel en *confidence* ophou – “wow, ek het nou net hierdie ding uitgefigure perongeluk” vs. 'n materiaal perfek te gebruik”

*because that's actually what the system is telling us, you must hand in the project for marks, you must hand in your journal for marks. So, therefore I think the play element is so so important. You actually can't go without it, even if it feels like there's no time, you have to make time for it; even if it is only once a term.*²⁵

The educator from an art school, where I used to have after school art lessons during primary school years, always encourage us with a song at the end of each lesson: *"I'm proud of myself, I'm proud of myself. Look at my painting, look at my painting. Wow!"* This cheer became a motivation for standing back and appreciating what you have made; a reassurance that your play efforts brought something about. It did not matter how "good" or "bad" the artwork was, because nonetheless you learnt something either about an art making technique or yourself. The TATE Gallery's (2018) research on the TALE study found that art can improve students' self-expression and creativity as well as confidence in their identity. The study has shown that creativity can help with the holistic wellbeing of learners and improve their health and happiness – learners who took part in the TALE study commented that "arts lessons acted as an outlet for releasing the pressures of studying as well as those of everyday life" (The TATE Gallery, 2018).

5.2.1.2 Wellbeing

According to Belluigi (2009:703), play is very significant in an art practice. Here 'play' does not refer to "non-serious endeavours" but rather "playing with, trying out, discarding identity, purpose, shape" (Parker 2003:541, in Belluigi, 2009:703). Thus play and creativity require the active engagement of the artist in forming, creating and interpreting what they are doing, even if the result is not known. In so doing, the individual gains a sense of the self (Belluigi, 2009:703). I would, however, challenge

²⁵ "Die uitkoms is nie dat die kind moet bekommerd hoef te wees van gaan ek hierop bepunt word nie, want ek dink dit is nogal belangrik dat die kind voel hier is nie iets verkeerd nie, ek mag ... 'n kans vat. Want ek dink dis wat 'n mens die kinders eintlik by wil bring wanneer mens die speel element inbring, is – jy mag 'n kansie vat ... want baie kinders hulle sit nogal druk op hulleself en hulle het vreeslike hoë standaarde en raak amper paniekerig ... mens kan verstaan want dis eintlik hoe die stelsel vir 'n mens sê, jy moet die projek ingee vir punte, jy moet jou joernaal ingee vir punte. So, ek dink ... daarom is daai speel element so so belangrik. Mens kan eintlik nie sonder dit nie, selfs ... al voel dit daars nie tyd nie mens moet tyd maak vir dit; al is dit net een keer 'n kwartaal."

this notion of “discarding identity” in play – perhaps rather trying something different from what one is used to. I am not of the opinion that one can set aside your identity for any activity. Perhaps the “discarding purpose” mentioned refers to play without expectations or a specific outcome in mind, yet not without meaning. I would rather side with De Botton (2013) who argues that it should not be surprising or strange for art to be purposeful, since artworks offer us hope and validate our sorrows, they teach us new things and help us understand ourselves, they inspire and rebalance us and make us “appreciate the familiar anew”. Artworks can remind us of what matters most in our lives (De Botton, 2013). With all these attributes ascribed to the arts, one realises the influence art can have on the artist as well as the viewer. Therefore art, in the making or experiencing thereof, can have a significant impact on the emotional or mental wellbeing of a person. In continuing the idea of building confidence and notions of self, P2 mentioned the possibility of art and play being an aid to the mental health of learners and supporting their holistic wellbeing.

P2 noted:

The value [of play], for me personally, has become much more clear in the Covid time, and I think it's because of the fact that everyone is more fragile and everyone needs more guidelines and the effects of play is more than just the outcomes for a project, it's actually psychological ... I think, the wellbeing of the learner through the process of play [is improved] ... it's not something that is mentioned in the curriculum, but one sees the effect thereof.²⁶

There are certain schools, such as Waldorf, that incorporate play in almost all aspects of learning. Waldorf schools aim to develop holistically healthy learners and play is seen as the primary means of doing so (Sobo, 2014:10). Play becomes a way to enhance a learner's health and well-being (Sobo, 2014:9).

²⁶ “die waarde daarvan het vir my persoonlik in die covid tyd, baie meer duidelik geword en ek dink dis as gevolg van die feit dat, almal is meer broos en almal het meer riglyne nodig en die effekte van speel is meer as net 'n uitkoms vir 'n projek, dis eintlik sielkundig ... die welsyn van die leerder deur die proses van speel, dink ek word baie [bevorder] ... dis nou nie iets wat in die curriculum genoem word nie, maar mens sien die effek daarvan.”

5.2.2 Factors against play

When asked why they thought learners do not incorporate play, P3 suggested: *“I think it depends on what primary school they come from” ... “I think it definitely depends on their background ... you can see it clearly [when art is encouraged at home]”*.²⁷ The educator indicated that play in high school carries on from play as a child and primary school and the encouragement thereof at home or elsewhere outside the formal school setting. Consequently, if art and experimentation is not encouraged previously, it would be difficult for a learner to start incorporating play spontaneously in high school. P3 further said, *“you [the educator] have to challenge them” ... “you have to make them a little excited as well.”*²⁸ Although not all learners come from a background where play or even art was encouraged, the educator now has an opportunity to assist a learner in the play process and foster an environment for freely experimenting. (The educator’s influence is further discussed in 5.2.3).

With the participants’ explanations about the Covid-19 lockdown period in 2020, it becomes apparent that accessibility and finances are also restrictions not only for play and making art but for the wider education system as well. The Western Cape schools where the participants teach at, had varied approaches to teaching during the lockdown time. While the schools of educators P2 and P3 had the means of continuing with classes in a virtual form, mostly using Microsoft Teams, P1 explained that their communication with the learners was restricted to WhatsApp, making it extremely difficult to truly see a learner’s progress and comment on their work.

P1 remarked:

Our school did not do online teaching at all. We stayed in contact with our art learners through WhatsApp, individually and groups. ... There was such a long time that we were in lockdown, and we gave the learners paper to work

²⁷ “ek dink dit hang af van watter laerskool hulle vandaan kom” ... “ek dink dit hang definitief af van die agtergrond” “jy kan dit dadelik sien” [as kuns ook by die huis aangemoedig word].”

²⁸ “jy moet hulle *challenge*” ... “jy moet hulle bietjie opgewonde maak ook”

*on their final artworks at home, but it was so difficult with the communication...*²⁹

*You contact them, again and again but they just don't get back to you and then you also get the idea, they don't really feel like making art.*³⁰

P3 added that although their school had online learning platforms in place, not all the learners have the financial means for the needed data to be able to access it. For these learners they printed out copies of the needed information, however for some learners this was not of help as they did not or could not collect the hardcopies. P3 noted: *"Some did nothing." ... "Those who were lazy became even lazier ... it is sorry to say that"*.³¹ P1 and P3 share the same sentiment that unfortunately the lockdown period made certain learners lazier or less interested in art and some are still bearing the consequences of that separation from the structured school environment.

P1 commented:

*There are maybe 1 or 2 learners per class that worked at home on their art. I really hoped that art would be something they wanted to do in lockdown because it's not maths, it's drawing, it is nice (in my mind).*³²

*I think especially the grade 11 group of ours still struggle now; because they were grade 10 last year they missed out on so many basics.*³³

The "laziness" mentioned above, by educator P3, perhaps reflects a deeper significance than purely a learner choosing to not do work, and be lazy. There are many factors that could have been at play that influenced the learners' readiness to work on art projects during the lockdown period. Personal factors such as disrupted

²⁹ "Ons skool het glad nie *online teaching* gedoen nie. One het met ons kuns kinders in kontak gebly deur WhatsApp, individueel en whatsapp groepe. ... Daar was so lang tyd wat ons in *lockdown* was, en ons het vir die kinders papier gegee waarop hulle die finale kunswerke aan kan werk by die huis, maar dit was so moeilik met die kommunikasie"

³⁰ "Mens kontak hulle en jy hou aan en aan maar hulle kom net nie terug na jou toe nie en dan kry mens ook eintlik die idee hulle is nie eintlik lus vir kuns nie."

³¹ "Party het niks gedoen nie" "die wat lui is het nog luiier geraak ... dis jammer om dit te sê"

³² "Daars miskien 1 of 2 kinders per klas wat gewerk het by die huis aan hulle kuns. Ek het so gehoop dat kuns iets is wat hulle wil doen in *lockdown* want dis mos nou nie wiskunde somme nie, dis teken dis lekker (in my kop)."

³³ "Ek dink veral daai graad 11 groep van ons sukkel nou nog, omdat hulle graad 10 was laas jaar het hulle uitgemis op so baie '*basics*'"

family life, other responsibilities like caring for siblings or other family members, etc. could cause learners to be unable to priorities their studies. Financial issues could also play a factor, which was especially highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic, some learners might have felt that pursuing an art career is no longer a good option in pandemic and post-pandemic times. Another opinion could also be that sometimes art is referred to as an “easy subject” that it does not require much effort and is not of critical to financial gain in contrast to subjects as maths or science. This is however a completely incorrect lens to view high school visual arts by, as it is an extremely time consuming school subject that could benefit learners in various aspects (as expounded on in 5.2.1) of their lives.

5.2.2.1 Fear

Another component that could limit play is a person's own restricting thoughts or fears. People are scared to make mistakes and be found incompetent, thus rather not trying or experimenting at all (Smith, 2019). Baer (2012:43) accuses “doubt and discomfort” as the culprits for an altogether halt of trying. P3 commented that “*many learners are scared ... yes, they don't want to be wrong*”³⁴ therefore, they are not willing to engage with play in their art making processes. This fear of failure links back to a previous section on confidence (5.2.1.1). If the learners are unable to gain a sense of confidence in their artistic abilities, there will always be fear of not being good enough. By not allowing fear to prohibit their making, but rather challenging the discomfort of fear, fear becomes part of the learning process (Baer, 2012:44, 48). This could possibly be one of the most difficult thought patterns to break and overcome as an artist. With making art however, I have found more often than not that, mistakes are blessings in disguise. It is frequently said that one learns more about yourself and your artistic abilities through these so called “mistakes” and as a result discovering ways to improve the skill or artwork (Smith, 2019; Baer, 2012).

In the previous section 5.2.1, it is said that P3 mentioned that learners are hesitant to include play in their journals: “*not everyone wants to do it in the book.*” They don't want “messy” work in their books, since the books are also considered for marking. In section 5.2.1.1, P1 contributed to this same notion by suggesting that the constant

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assessment of learners' art work and visual journals enforces pressure on the learners to achieve; *"that is what the system is telling us, you must hand in the project for marks, you must hand in your journal for marks."* P2 touched on a similar notion, saying that learners are concerned with making a *"perfect thing"*, hence not immersing themselves in the process of play and not allowing themselves to make mistakes. This pressure of handing your art in for marks along with the self-inflicted pressure of not wanting to be wrong or make mistakes, stirs fear in learners. (Smith, 2019)

Baer (2012:48) deduces that her responsibility as educator is "to cultivate confidence in my students so this constant return to the sketchbook becomes a positive habit in which reflection enables greater knowledge of self and, therefore, growth". Educators thus have a profound role in creating an atmosphere where learners are comfortable to experiment, to make mistakes and not be condemned for it but rather guided in order to learn from so-called 'mistakes' and possibly turn the mistake into a new idea. (The educators' influence on learners and their art practices are discussed in section 5.2.3.)

To play without fear bearing one down allows for freedom in the making process that I have found often yields exciting and innovative ideas. One of the most important factors required to play freely is sufficient time.

5.2.2.2 Time

In the individual interviews it was mentioned repeatedly that time does not always allow play to form part of high school art education. All the participants agreed that time is an important factor when it comes to incorporating play and an increased allowance of time to play should be made possible in high school art pedagogy.

P3 agreed: *"time is definitely a factor" ... "also the length of classes"*.³⁵

P1: *"I often think with time there's a restriction to actually show [play activities] to them."*³⁶

³⁵ "definitief tyd is 'n faktor" ... "periode lengtes"

³⁶ "ek dink baie keer net met tyd is daar maar 'n beperking om dit *actually* vir hulle te wys"

However, P2 is also of the opinion that even a little amount of play goes a long way:

*I must say, what you get out of that moment of play, I almost want to say, the credit on that; that which it generates, is priceless. So I think even if one does it twice a term or at the beginning of a project; I really now see the value of it.*³⁷

Belluigi (2009:703) furthermore argues that “play” is necessary for critical and creative skills to develop in art students, and play is only possible in “a context of trust and acceptance”. “For this reason, art education is ideally intended to be experienced ... with enough time and allowance for students to explore their aims and extend their limits, with ‘space’ for play, uncertainty, maturation and critical reflection.” (Belluigi, 2009:703). Belluigi points out the role of time, which, among other factors, is crucial for play to be utilised effectively. The educators noted that although unlimited time for play is ideal, school could not adequately allow this time because of other subjects and the learners having to navigate between classes, as P3 mentioned: “[they] have many other subjects as well”.³⁸

P2 remarked:

*Everyone, I’m convinced, everyone has an intrinsic ability to play ... but I think in the high school context with seven subjects per day, every time gears have to change, one can’t properly get into the zone where play really is and that’s why I think educators’ guidance is so important. You provide guidance ... you don’t necessarily say what to do, but you just open the door that he or she knows it’s okay to do it; or actually what one does is reminding the learner of what he or she can already do.*³⁹

P2 continued:

³⁷ “Maar ek moet nogal sê wat mens uitkry uit daai oomblik se speel, ek wil amper sê, die krediet op dit of ... dit wat dit genereer is ‘priceless’. So, ek dink amper al doen ‘n mens dit twee keer in ‘n kwartaal of aan die begin van ‘n projek; ek sien regtig nou die waarde daarvan”

³⁸ “baie ander vakke ook”

³⁹ “almal, ek is amper vasotoortuig, almal het ‘n intrinsieke ... vermoë om te speel, ... maar ek dink in die hoërskool konteks, met 7 vakke per dag, elke keer ratte verwissel, mens kan net nie so lekker in die zone kom waar speel regtig is nie en dit is hoekom ek dink onderwyser leiding so belangrik is. Jy gee leiding ... jy sê nie noodwendig wat om te doen nie, maar jy maak net die deur oop dat hy of sy weet dis oraaï om dit te doen; of eintlik wat mens doen is jy herinner die kind aan wat hy of sy alreeds kan doen.”

There is a book by a Czech writer, Flow⁴⁰ is the book's name, it is about creative flow that you get in the zone to make art ... It was noticeable to me that it takes quite a while ... one cannot have disruptions the whole time, so that is why guidance from the educator (it's not the only way, but) I think it's good to give the learners a few guidelines; like "take this strange surface, take this strange element ... and do this" and when the learner starts then he does the play himself, he does the exploring and the whole time you just say "you can't make a mistake," "keep going," "don't be scared;" so that's actually all that you [as the educator] say.⁴¹

P2 suggests the importance of utilising the time that is available well. This will however require more planning from the educator and perhaps a willingness to go beyond their job description in order to plan for play and encourage the learners through the process. Therefore, some educators would prefer not to include elements of play, according to P3 *"one has to plan ... that's why many educators don't allow [play]; it's a hassle to set aside time" ... "but it's absolutely valuable."*⁴² For learners and educators alike, if the value of play in art is realised, it would become a priority for that individual and time would be set aside for it.

5.2.3 Educator influence

Especially in school, even in high school the educator plays a great role in guiding and influencing the art and minds of their learners. In the TALE study, some learners also noted that encouragement from their educators or family would increase their engagement in art activities (TALE, 2018:5).

Addressing the role of an art educator, P2 remarked:

⁴⁰ *Flow* (1990) by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

⁴¹ "daar is so boek van so Czechiese skrywer, *Flow* is die boek se naam, wat gaan oor kreatiewe vloei wat jy in die zone kom om kuns te maak. ... Dit was vir my opvallend dat dit vat nogal 'n rukkie ... mens kan nie die heeltid onderbreukings hê nie, so dit is hoekom onderwyser leiding (dis nie die enigste manier nie, maar) ek dink dis goed om net vir die kinders 'n paar riglyne te gee; soos "vat hierdie vreemde oppervlakte, vat hierdie vreemde element ... en doen dit" en wanneer die kind begin dan doen hy self die speel, hy doen self 'explore' en die heeltid sê mens net "jy kan nie 'n fout maak nie" "gaan aan" "moennie bang wees nie"; so dis eintlik al wat mens [as onderwyser] sê."

⁴² "mens moet beplan" "dis hoekom baie onderwysers dit [speel] nie toelaat nie, dis 'n *schlep* om nou weer tyd uit te sit" "maar dis absoluut waardevol"

*So you put the things there for the learner – it is almost like ... child psychology ... you place a few items before the child and then you look what he or she will do with them – this is sometimes the role of the educator as well; you just give those few things then you just let it run and see what comes out of it.*⁴³

Karkou and Glasman (2004:58) in their study found that the art educator can have a profound impact by addressing learners' personal needs and supporting their development. Thus the arts, when appropriately used, "can contribute towards the personal wellbeing and social integration of school students" and the "capacity of children/ young people to learn and achieve can be facilitated and ultimately strengthened" (ibid.).

Belluigi (2009:700) states that it is the educators' responsibility to encourage critical and creative thinking, skills and habits and create the space for it.

P1 observed:

*I often have to remind myself that many times my expectations of the learners are too high, I think they will come up with these things [experimenting and new ideas] themselves, but I have to remind myself, they're only children ... they're not exposed to everything I have been exposed to and even art training and art studies and so on ... so it seems to me the educator's role is from grade 10 (grades 8 and 9 are difficult, so from grade 10), to foster a culture of play.*⁴⁴

Although the notion of play proposed in this thesis is a process of self-generated free expression and boundless experimentation, the participants' suggestions have shed new light on this matter. The participants have revealed that learners, even those in higher grades, require guidance and structure in their art practices. The learners first

⁴³ "So jy sit die goedjies vir die kind daar – dis amper soos ... kinder sielkunde ... jy sit 'n paar items vir die kind daar neer en dan kyk jy wat hy of sy daarmee gaan maak – dis die rol van die onderwyser soms ook; jy gee net daai paar goedjies dan laat jy dit net hardloop en kyk wat daar uitkom"

⁴⁴ "ek moet myself baie keer herinner ek het baie keer sulke hoë verwagtinge van die kinders, ek dink hulle gaan self by hierdie goed [speel eksperimenteering en nuwe idees] uitkom, maar ek moet myself herinner, hulle is net kinders ... hulle is nie al *exposed* aan alles waaraan ek *exposed* is en even kuns opleiding vir kuns studies en so nie ... so dit voel vir my die onderwyser se rol is om van graad 10 af (gr 8 en 9 is moeilik) so van graad 10 af, so half 'n kultuur van speel te kweek."

need to be taught how to play before being able to successfully or productively implement play in their practices. Hence, play in high school art education would not benefit from a formless/ unstructured inclusion of play. The results of playing remains unanticipated, however. P1 added that it could also be beneficial for educators to practise art and/or play in their personal capacity: *“I’m a seriously in favour of the educator (at least a little bit) being a practising artist; that they themselves also remember, okay but when I play, then this is how it can look.”*⁴⁵

P3 commented that the way the project brief is phrased could perhaps steer the learners to experiment more and play with different concepts:

*You have to think carefully about the assignments ... especially today, there is so much to look at. They immediately jump onto Pinterest or Google. So if you choose a theme that they can easily find [examples of] then they won’t experiment, so you [as the educator] have to think the whole time, what can I put together or do something different so that they can just think outside of the box.*⁴⁶

Educator P3 mentioned the influence of the Internet and social media on the learners. P2, however, stated that she encourages the learners to use specifically Pinterest as a source of information. Suggate and Martzog (2020:2) indicate that screen-time influences the mental imagery and cognitive development of people. Suggate and Martzog (2020:10) suggest that perhaps increased screen-time decreases learners’ time in activities such as imaginative play. Consequently, if misused, the use of internet and social media could be detrimental to a learner’s experimentation and exploration; the imagination of a learner could become clouded by what was gazed upon, therefore struggling to form their own thoughts regarding the specific topic/theme. If managed correctly, however, social media could be an asset to play and the forming of ideas through enhancing imagination and seeing what is possible with a specific medium or technique.

⁴⁵ “Ek is ‘n groot voorstaander daarvoor dat die onderwyser self ... (tenminste net ‘n bietjie), ‘n praktiserende kunstenaar is; dat hulle self onthou ook *okay* maar as ek speel dan, dis hoe dit kan lyk.”

⁴⁶ “jy moet hulle maar *challenge* ook so jy moet maar mooi dink oor die opdragte” “veral vandag, daar is so baie om na te kyk, hulle spring dadelik op pintrest of google so as jy nou ‘n tema kies wat hulle so kan kry dan gaan hulle nie eksperimenteer nie, so jy [as onderwyser] moet heeltyd dink, wat kan ek by mekaar sit of iets ander sodat hulle net uit die boks kan dink”

Educators have the power to design activities and assignments in a way to foster critical thinking and creativity. Student creativity is promoted by “supportive, student-centred environments that value divergence and diversity; encourage playfulness, risk-taking and experimentation; and, important in this context, assessment practices that focus on positive feedback and diagnostic evaluation” (Belluigi, 2009:715). P1’s following comment relates to Belluigi’s notion of educators actively creating a space for play and critical thinking. Intentional planning is thus required to make that vision possible.

P1 remarked:

One [should] just take a bit of initiative and be intentional with it, I think as with many things in life (as I realise all the more as I get older) it’s not just going to happen, you have to decide ... I want the learners at school to play, so I have to work play in, in the week.⁴⁷

The differences between learners should also be accounted for, said P3:

You have to know your learners ... look at each individually and show him ... I often have perfectionist learners in my class and then you should rather show them examples and just leave them, they would rather go and try it at home on a separate paper, they wouldn’t do it in their books because if it turns out ugly or messy, they don’t want it in their books.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ “mens [moet] net bietjie inisiatief eintlik neem, en dat mens intentional is daarmee, ek dink soos met baie ander goed in die lewe (soos wat ek ook al hoe meer besef soos ek ouer word) dit gaan nie net gebeur nie, jy moet besluit ... ek wil hê die kinders by die skool moet speel, so ek moet speel inwerk in die week.”

⁴⁸ “jy moet jou kinders ken ... elkeen individueel bekijk en wys hom” “ek het baie keer perfekjonistiese kinders in my klas en dan moet jy eerder vir hulle voorbeelde wys en dan hulle net los, hulle gaan dit eerder by die huis gaan probeer op ‘n stuk papier, hy gaan dit nie in sy boek doen nie, want netou is dit lelik en slordig en dan wil hulle dit nie in hulle boeke hê nie.”

5.2.3.1 Curriculum

“I think the curriculum⁴⁹ when it comes to the practical side of the work, there is definitely space [for play] and it depends on the educator what they do with it.”⁵⁰ – is what P1 remarked during the individual interview.

With regard to the curriculum for visual arts in high school, P2 commented:

There is a set curriculum with outcomes, but in those outcomes there actually is that element of “process work” or “get to know the medium”, “experimentation” so under that category play is actually built in. So I almost want to say play is inherently present in the curriculum for art.⁵¹

P2 stated that play is already part of the high school art syllabus, and learners are compelled to experiment and explore through the process, yet play is not always prevalent, according to the discussions with the participants. Perhaps some educators deem play insignificant, or they do not know how to incorporate play effectively, thus the notion of providing play workshops to educators could be valuable (this is elaborated on in 5.2.4.1). Perhaps, as previously expressed in 5.2.2.2, it is once again an issue of time or as P3 mentions below, basic skills such as drawing having to be prioritised above play.

Educator P3 shared their observed disparity between play and skills learning as it changed in the curriculum over the years:

On the one hand regarding play, it is better ... but basic skills like drawing skills have been lost a little ... When I began teaching you had to set up still life drawing, more traditional, but the learners could draw better. So now you

⁴⁹ All three of the Western Cape schools participating in this study make use of the CAPS curriculum and thus are subject to the same stipulations.

⁵⁰ “Ek dink in die kurrikulum as dit kom by die praktiese kant van die werk is daar definitief ruimte [vir speel] en dit hang eintlik maar af van die onderwyser wat hulle daarmee doen.”

⁵¹ “Daar is ‘n vaste kurrikulum wat uitkomst het, maar in daai uitkomst is daar eintlik daai element van “proses werk” of “leer die medium ken” “eksperimenteering” so onder daai vaandel is speel eintlik ingebou” So ek wil amper sê speel is inherent teenwoordig in die kurrikulum vir kuns”

*have to combine the two – so still teaching them those skills in between, together with the experimentation...*⁵²

Change has come to the way visual art is taught and play is introduced in these three high schools since I had been in school. The learners are taught a much wider variety of techniques and mediums and ways of producing visual art which already improves the aspect of play in the making process because there are more known options to explore. The experimentation and exploring aspect of play has also become fundamental in the curriculum over the years.

P2: *“Play is definitely integral to visual art and creative arts ... it should actually seriously be encouraged.”*⁵³

Belluigi (2009:715) claims a “valid” curriculum would involve valuing the instinctive response between creativity and critical thinking of learners. Therefore De Klerk (2020:836) asserts that educators should be critical people, striving to improve society and allowing learners to do the same. The role of the educator is undoubtedly influential in creating an environment for enhancing learners’ thinking and development (Moeller *et al.*, 2013:60; Belluigi, 2009:700).

5.2.4 Activating play

What follows are practical and theoretical examples of play proposed by the participants or from my experience while studying Fine Art:

5.2.4.1 Practical

The participants mentioned various ideas for play that they had introduced to their classes over their years of teaching art. Some of these ideas are recorded below.

To help play along, P3 suggested *“firstly getting away from a plain white page” ... “first colour the page and then draw on it; this helps.”*⁵⁴ I agree with P3’s proposition.

⁵² “Aan die een kant wat speel aanbetref beter ... maar basic skills, soos teken skills het bietjie verlore gegaan ... Toe ek begin skool gee het moes jy vir die kinders stil lewes opstel, meer tradisioneel, maar die kinders kon vir my beter teken. So nou moet jy die twee kombineer – so nogsteeds daai skills vir hulle tussenin leer saam met die eksperimenteering...”

⁵³ “speel is definitief integraal tot visuele kuns en skeppende kunste ... dit moet eintlik ernstig aangemoedig word”

Personally, I remember being absolutely frightened of drawing on a plain white sheet of paper in high school. Working on a brown or even off-white surface did not have that effect on me.

P2 recommended:

*What I try to do (although I'm not sure how successfully it is implemented) is small short activities that has to do with the project, like planning, every now and again, when the learners almost don't expect it ... you go with the flow but if you see the learners hitting a wall, I think then play is quite important.*⁵⁵

P2 furthermore shared using a strategy of surprising the learners:

*So I realised that element of surprise is quite [effective]; immediately you have the learners' attention. You can realise in the next lesson, they are [thinking]: "Okay, are we going to do this again or what?" ... instead of entering the classroom and thinking they know exactly what the teaching process will look like.*⁵⁶

In the workshop I shared a few practical ways of approaching the art making process with play. The first two exercises of the workshop were used to get the participants to be active and observant regarding the workshop activity as a whole. The first exercise was a quick sketch (Figures 1-4) for which the participant were only afforded approximately 30 seconds to draw an object they saw before them. After this first activity, the educators either (jokingly) doubted their own drawing abilities or were surprised with how it feels to be at the receiving end of exercises since they usually are the ones explaining or demonstrating it. Providing educators with play workshops, such as the one in this study, could thus enhance the educators' abilities to realise how the learners will receive their instructions to play and how play could

⁵⁴ "eerstens om net weg te kom van 'n skoon wit bladsy" ... "Kleur net eers die bladsy en teken dan daarop; dit help."

⁵⁵ "wat ek self probeer doen (alhoewel ek nie seker is hoe suksesvol dit deurgevoer word nie) is om klein kort aktiwiteitjies [aan te pak] wat te doen het met die projek, soos beplanning; nou en dan, wanneer die kinders dit amper nie verwag nie ... mens *go with the flow*, maar as jy sien die kinders slaan 'n muur, ek dink speel is dan nogal veral belangrik."

⁵⁶ "So ek het agtergekom daai element van surprise of verrassing is nogal [effektief]; onmiddellik het jy die leerders se aandag, jy kan agterkom in die volgende periode hulle is so: "Okay gaan ons dit nou weer doen of wat?" So inplaas daarvan dat hulle inkom en net dink, ek weet hoe die periode gaan lyk."

look. Educators would learn from each other as play experimentation is shared, allowing more ideas of incorporating play with the learners in their classrooms. By affording educators the opportunity to expand their own sense of play, this would consequently benefit the learners as well.

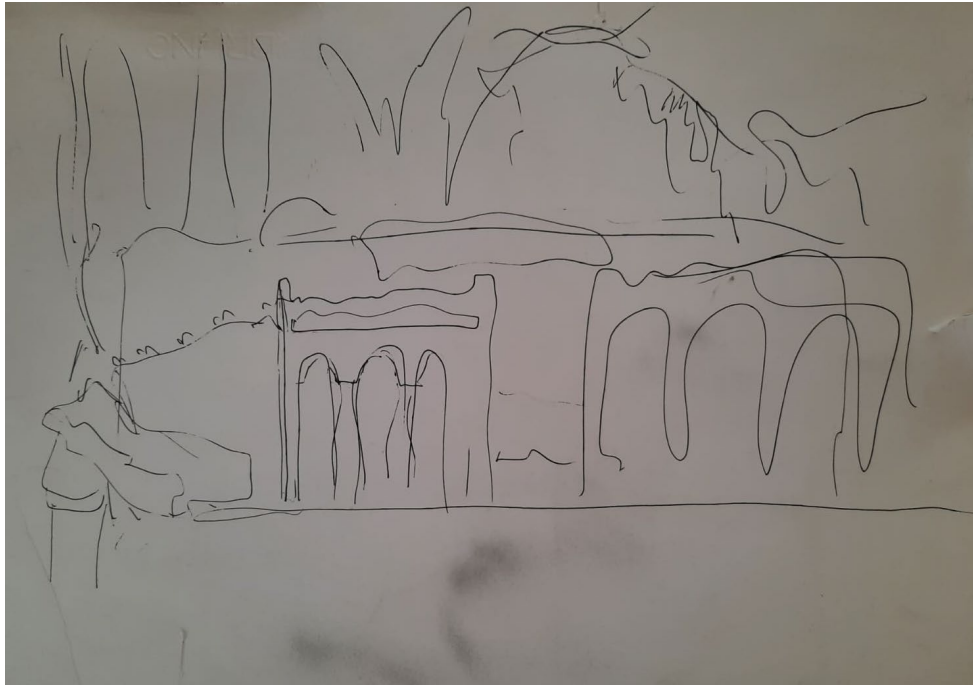


Figure 1: Educator P1, 2021. *Quick sketch.* Pen on paper. Photograph by participant.



Figure 2: Educator P2, 2021. *Quick sketch.* Green pen and watercolour on paper. Photograph by participant.



Figure 3: Educator P3, 2021. *Quick sketch.* Charcoal on paper.
Photograph by participant.



Figure 4: Nicla Botha, 2021. *Quick sketch.* Charcoal on paper. Photograph by author.

I have realised that being active in play and including movement in the process allows one's mind to wander and often brings new ideas to the fore. P1 agreed: "*they [the learners] are not properly awake, so that movement [is key]*."⁵⁷ The second activity during the workshop also related to this notion of movement. The idea was to use large arm or body movements while expressively drawing an object in the vicinity. Figures 5 – 8 present these drawings.

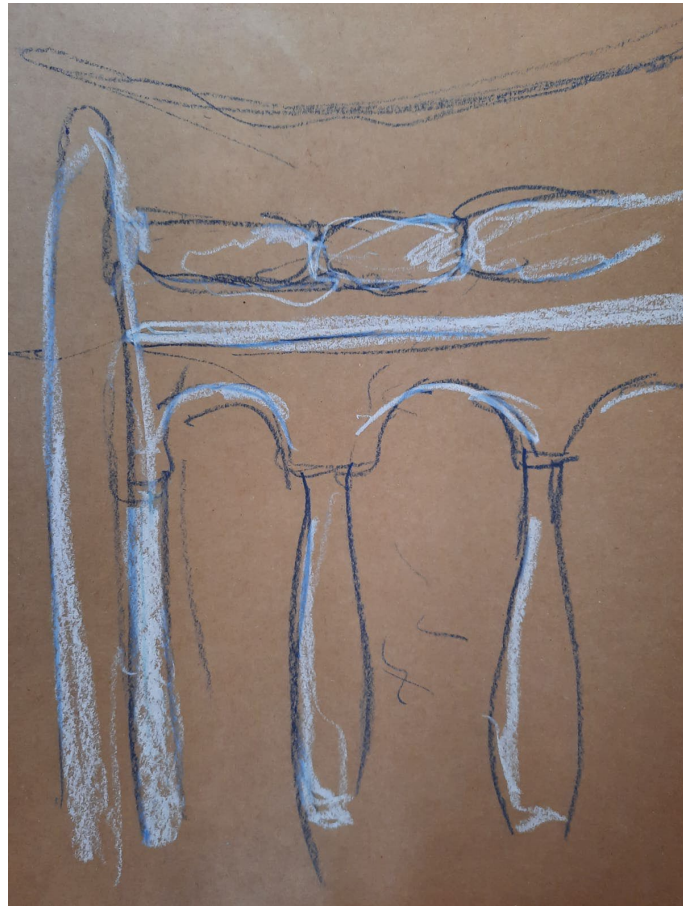


Figure 5: Educator P1, 2021. *Sketch 2.* Charcoal and pencil on paper.
Photograph by participant.

⁵⁷ "hulle is nie lekker wakker nie, so daai beweging [is key]"



Figure 6: Educator P2, 2021. *Sketch 2*. Ink on paper. Photograph by participant.



Figure 7: Educator P3, 2021. *Sketch 2*. Charcoal on paper.
Photograph by participant.



Figure 8: Nicla Botha, 2021. *Sketch 2*. Charcoal on paper. Photograph by author.

As the final activity for the workshop, the participants were asked to use a random object, now as an art object, to make a mark on a surface. The experimentation indicated that any object or material can become a utensil in the course of the making. In some way, shape or form, the application of one material to another brings about something new – and play is in action. The participants enjoyed this challenge very much, that already indicated the excitement play can conjure through participation in the process. What allowed me to call this a successful activity and worthwhile workshop was the excitement play conjured up in the participants and the joy that play brought to them. P1 shared this sentiment when one of the learners in the educator’s class made a discovery through play – *“it was so nice for me to see that it brought her so much joy in the work”*.⁵⁸

At the end of the workshop P2 remarked:

The last exercise where we worked in an foreign medium ... I wonder if that is how the rock artists felt when they had to try figure out what to do with those ochre stones ... because it feels like you are having to think anew of marks,

⁵⁸ “dit was vir my so lekker om te sien dat dit haar soveel joy laat vind het in die werk”

*where do marks come from, how can I make marks. ... It's very refreshing to do something completely different.*⁵⁹

This response from P2 is a desired way of thinking through play and thus navigating how new marks can be made, leading to new concepts or new making techniques. Participant P1 unexpectedly found a new way of making through the workshop's process of play. P1 used an old acrylic artwork as a drawing surface. This participant was attempting to clean excess paint from the surface with Sunlight Liquid, when P1 discovered that the surface with the paint could become a print tablet and the Sunlight the fluid needed to transfer paint to a new paper surface (Figures 12-14). P1 with much excitement declared: *"I have made a discovery!"*⁶⁰



Figure 9: Educator P1, 2021. *Previous artwork.* Acrylic paint on paper.
Photograph by participant.

⁵⁹ "Die laaste oefening waar ons met 'n ongewone medium werk, ... ek wonder of dit is hoe die rotskunstenaars gevoel het toe hulle moes probeer uitfigure wat gaan ek nou met hierdie oker klippie maak en hoe ... want dit voel vir mens nogal asof jy heeltemal van nuuts moet dink van merke, waar kom merke vandaan, hoe kan ek merke maak." "dis baie verrissend om iets heeltemal anderste te doen."

⁶⁰ "Ek het 'n ontdekking gemaak!"



Figure 10: Educator P1, 2021. *Free play*. Old acrylic paint remnants, Sunlight Liquid on paper. Photograph by participant.



Figure 11: Educator P1, 2021. *Free play* (detail). Old acrylic paint remnants, Sunlight Liquid on paper. Photograph by participant.

P3 (Figures 15 &16) was pleased with the unexpected marks in the artwork she produced during the play session. The educator used materials available on the desk, where she was working, such as, charcoal pieces, Vicks, a few drops of tea and a USB flash drive to scratch the paper surface with. Through combining

elements of materials one would not traditionally associate with art-making, P3 made a drawing one would not have thought of making, if play was not encouraged.

P2 and P3, as well as my own attempts at play during the workshop:



Figure 12: Educator P2, 2021. *Green words and Free play* combined. Ink, pen and pencil on paper. Photograph by participant.



Figure 13: Educator P3, 2021. *Free play*. Charcoal, Vicks and tea on paper. Photograph by participant.



Figure 14: Educator P3, 2021. *Free play* (detail). Charcoal, Vicks and tea on paper.
Photograph by participant.



Figure 15: Nicla Botha, 2021. *Free play*. Charcoal and masking tape on paper.
Photograph by author.

5.2.4.2 Theory

Play could also happen with words and writing, and not necessarily just in the practical, making aspect of art. In high school art pedagogy, a 'brainstorm' of sorts is often required. I have found during my own high school career, that writing down all my initial ideas or words associated to the provided theme, helped me to not become stuck with one idea. I did a similar exercise with the participants during the workshop. The word "green" was presented to them as a hypothetical art practical theme. The participants were then asked to write down any words and phrases that come to mind when thinking of the word "green". Figures 9 till 11 (Figure 11 is on page 58) show their efforts.

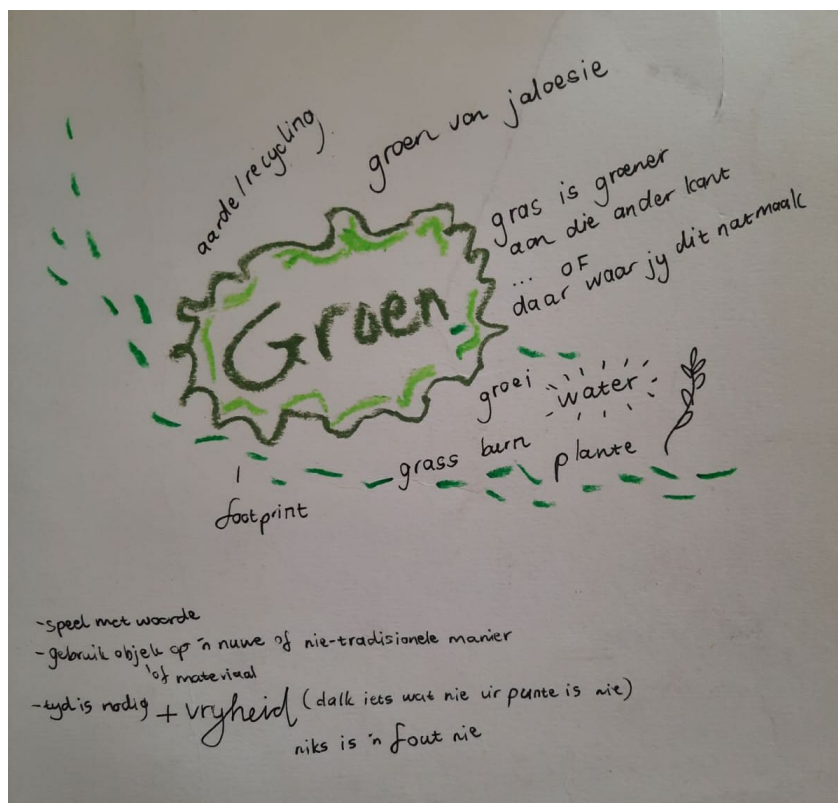


Figure 16: Educator P1, 2021. *Green words*. Photograph by participant.

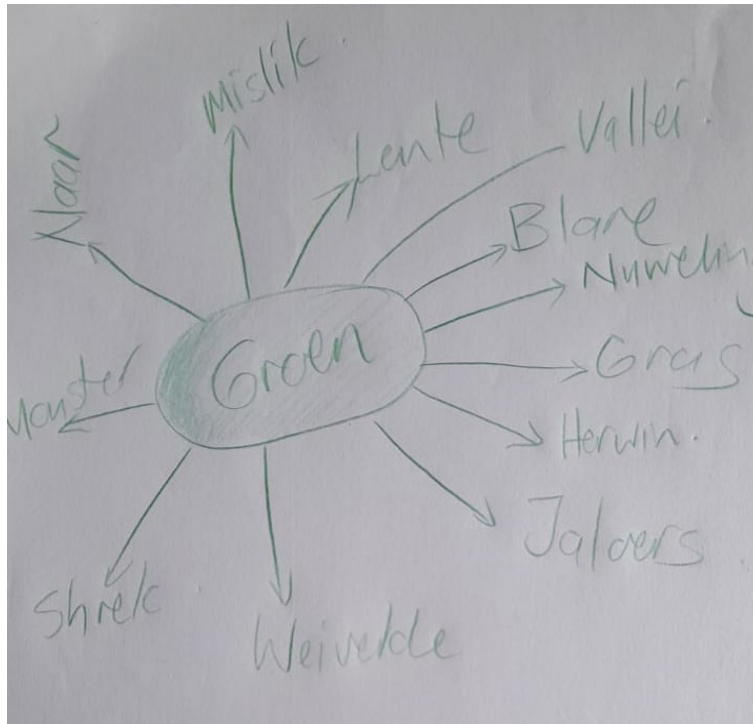


Figure 17: Educator P3, 2021. *Green words*. Photograph by participant.

Besides in word elements as part of practical, play could also form part of the theoretical aspect of art education. Educator P2 was the first to mention play in art theory during our individual interview. Until then, I had not considered the incorporation of play in the theory element of high school visual art.

P2 commented:

*Play for practical is to an extent easier than play for theory ... For theory once I did a quiz in the class context, where it's sort of okay we divided the class in two groups and do the quiz like that ... in the theory context.*⁶¹

P1 noted:

I've had this idea that when you're done with a chapter that you play 30 seconds or something that specifically relate to the work. Because the learners are so exposed to games the whole time and entertainment and stuff and I think it will have very good results if you include it in the art class.

⁶¹ "Speel vir prakties is tot 'n mate makliker as speel vir teorie" ... "Ek het een keer vir teorie ... 'n quiz, in 'n klas konteks [gedoen], waar dit soortvan okay ons deel die klas in twee groepe en doen die quiz so ... in die teorie konteks."

*Certain people do very well with competitions or being under pressure, so if you can gain points for your team or win a chocolate or a brush or something ... Then it's another motivation to study.*⁶²

P2 continued by suggesting creative ways for analysing artworks:

*Climb in the painting ... I'm inside the artwork; what do I smell, what do I see, what is the weather like, do I feel the wind, do I feel the pebbles under my shoes; so then we took it from that angle, almost like a night at the museum, virtual reality. Where the painting that is usually analysed using theoretical terms, is now taken apart like a little puzzle. That for the play aspect the terms are put on the side-line and are really analysed piece by piece.*⁶³

P2 further recalled another incident of incorporating play in art theory:

*My colleague, once for a theory lesson, to teach terminology to the learners, gave each of them a marshmallow and peanut brittle ... then they had to taste it ... and then, while eating the peanut brittle then they have to say what they taste, what is the texture ... and as they continued they actually mentioned all the elements of art. And when they ate the marshmallow ... one might think this could be very limiting but it turned out the learners had so much they could say about the formal elements of art and this through only eating peanut brittle and a marshmallow.*⁶⁴

⁶² "Ek het hierdie idee gehad dat as mens klaar is met 'n hoofstuk dat mens 30 seconds of iets speel, wat spesifiek gaan oor die hoofstuk. Want die kinders, hulle is so blootgestel aan 'games' heeltyd en *entertainment* en goed en ek dink dit sal baie goeie resultate hê as mens dit in die kunsklas inbring. Sekere mense doen baie goed onder kompetisie of onder druk, so as jy nou punte kan kry vir jou span of 'n *chocolate* wen of 'n kwas of iets... Dan is dit 'n ander motivering om te leer."

⁶³ "Klim in die skildery" ... "ek is binne die kunswerk; wat ruik ek, wat sien ek, hoe is die weer, voel ek die wind waai, voel ek die klippies onder my skoene; so toe het ons dit van daai *angle* af gevat; amper soos 'n *night at the museum, virtual reality*. Waar vir 'n slag die skildery wat gewoonlik teoreties met terme analiseer word, wat amper soos 'n puzzletjie uitmekaar uit gehaal word, dat vir die spel aspek die terme ... op die kantlyn gesit het en regtig stukkies vir stukkies [ontleed]"

⁶⁴ "my kollega het een keer vir 'n teorie oefening om vir die leerders terminologie te leer; vir hulle elkeen 'n *marshmallow* gekry en 'n *peanut brittle* ... toe moes hulle dit proe ... en dan terwyl hulle die *peanut brittle* eet dan moet hulle sê *okay* ek proe dit, wat is die tekstuur ... en soos wat hulle aangegaan het, het hulle eintlik al die elemente van kuns aangespreek. En toe het hulle weer die *marshmallow* geëet ... en 'n mens sal dink dit kan eintlik baie beperk wees, maar toe kom dit uit die kinders het so baie eintlik kon sê van die formele elemente van kuns en dis net deur *peanut brittle* eet en 'n *marshmallow*."

Again, West, *et al.* (2016:72) suggestion that with a playful approach anything can become play, is applicable. Therefore, whether it be a quiz, word games or competitions, “climbing in the painting” or activating all one’s senses, there are modes of incorporating play elements in art theory to engage learners with the work, help them understand the concepts and guide them through analysing artworks better.

P2 concluded:

It is important to know the terms, but you also first have to get a love and observe it and make it your own. And I think that’s also the thing about play, through play you make the subject your own...⁶⁵

Incorporating play elements in theory could encourage learners to engage more with art theory, understand the artworks better and possibly enjoy studying art theory.

5.3 Synthesis

This is a summary of the main points pertaining to play in high school art practices as discussed above. I realise now that it is not as simple as I expected to increase play in high school learners’ practices. Yet, with the educators’ insights and the findings from the data, play could still be practiced in high school art education and could enhance the creativity, productivity and enjoyment of art for the learners.

The findings of this study revealed that methods of play in some ways are incorporated in high school art, but there is space for more play to take place as it has noticeable positive effects on the learners, as observed by the educators. Play allows new ideas regarding a project theme to form as one works through current ideas; it allows for new media or techniques to develop through the combination of different materials; it allows freeing the imagination to try something new and to make mistakes without consequences; builds confidence and could aid one’s wellbeing. Play ignites passion and excitement, and challenges and expands critical thinking in those participating in play.

⁶⁵ “Dis belangrik om die terme te ken, maar jy moet ook eers ‘n liefde kry en dit waarneem en dit jou eie maak. En ek dink dis ook die ding van speel, is deur speel maak jy die onderwerp jou eie.”

The findings further disclosed that there are certain components that hinder learners from playing freely. Often it is a learner's own mind that prohibits them from engaging in and enjoying play activities. Fear of making a mistake or failing at a task could bring their creative thinking to a complete halt and thus hinder them from experiencing the process of play with excitement of discovering new ideas and a readiness to learn. Another aspect that comes in the way of experiencing play wholeheartedly is limited time. For art lessons in class, play is restricted by the school bell announcing the start of the next period. Educators just often refrain from allocating time for play, just to get through the needed work in the available class time. Learners also have many other subjects and hence need to manage their time for each subject in order to get all their work done.

Time however, was less of a restriction for some learners during the strict lockdown period in 2020, due to Covid-19. Working from home in that time, without extracurricular activities, traveling to and from school etc. allowed the learners to spend more time on art projects. Some participants mentioned that certain learners started experimenting and incorporating play more in their art-making processes, during the lockdown period. The lockdown however created many other hurdles for education, especially communication between educator and learner was separated by screens. Many learners also did not have the means, as other did, to access constant online modes of communication and education.

The educators also realised the importance of guidance for their learners during the lockdown. There is a responsibility for art educators to create an environment for learners to explore, create and discover through play. In the section about activating play in art practice, P1 enthusiastically stated that the play process led to the discovery of a new printmaking technique. This incidence is exactly what play can bring about for high school art learners if they are willing to put aside the time and engage with play along with the support and guidance of their educator.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Implications

6.1 Introduction

I realised the value of ‘play’ in my own art practice, while studying for a Fine Art undergraduate degree. Approaching the making process with play allowed an exploratory process instead of the pressured environment of production. I realised that high school art learners could possibly also benefit from such an approach to their art projects. This study was therefore undertaken to investigate the presence of play in high school art education in order to determine the influence thereof on the learners and what may be needed for such play to be included in high school art. This was achieved through a focused case study approach that was limited to three Western Cape high school art educators. Data was collected from individual interviews and an online workshop with these high school art educators as the participants. The study’s small sample size was subject to educators’ availability which unfortunately was influenced by continually changing Covid-19 regulations.

6.2 Conclusions drawn from the findings

Taking all the data collected into account it became clear that play is a valuable tool for approaching art-making processes. Some participants referred to the effects of play on their learners as “*priceless*” suggesting that the inclusion of play indeed aided in the art practices of high school learners. The findings of the study for this thesis have shown that play (as understood in the context of this thesis) is already incorporated to some extent in the three high school art classrooms. However, the participants agreed that there is space and opportunity for play to be integrated more comprehensively in the high school art practice.

The findings show that the positive impacts play in art education could have on learners includes strengthening their critical and creative minds, building confidence in their own artistic abilities as well as in their identities which thus aids in their holistic wellbeing. If play and visual art is embraced and stewarded well, there could

be immense freedom in the process as Reddy (1998:105) claims that making art “becomes the most precious evidence of freedom”.

During the lockdown in 2020, some learners welcomed the opportunity to experiment on their own, while others did not have the means, financially or otherwise, to engage in their schooling properly, let alone enjoy play. Play requires time; however, one of the main factors resisting play is time. Learners have many other subjects and personal responsibilities, and during school the limited lesson time does not frequently allow sufficient play. Another hindrance to play discussed in the findings is fear. Learners are fearful of making mistakes, believing it will decrease their marks. Educators have an important task to facilitate play in the art class and furthermore create an environment where learners feel safe to try, fail and try again. Learners require the assistance and guidance of the educator towards understanding the notion of play-experimentation and how such exploration can work practically. The discussion of the findings revealed that it would presumably benefit educators to create/ attend play workshops in order to expand their own skills and share among each another. As a result, educators would be able to more effectively introduce play to their learners.

The participants highlighted that play is also required in the theoretical aspects of high school art. Thus the inclusion of play activities or challenges such as quizzes can be used to engage the learners more with the learning material. Furthermore, incorporating the learners’ senses when analysing artworks, allow them imagine themselves alongside/ inside the work and teaches them to explain what it is that they experience. The most exciting part of play for me personally is to unexpectedly stumble across a new technique or material that I have not previously thought could become part of my practice. When one participant, P1, made such a discovery during the workshop, I realised again why the concept of play is so important to me and I believe it could be equally important to all learners and artists; this being derived from the childlikeness of experimenting, trying something different, without specific expectations, without self-imposed pressure or fear of failure, while playing freely, exploring and making.

6.3 Further research and critique of the research

There are plenty of avenues of research for exploration regarding play. This thesis has merely touched the surface of play and its influence on the development of children growing up as well as learners being taught art in a school setting. Further research into play as part of the theory aspect of art could also be explored. This study could also be adapted to be conducted at other schools in South Africa and abroad.

The main critique I have of this study is that the number of participants was not enough and perhaps the diversity among them not wide enough, to sufficiently represent Western Cape art educators as a whole. This study would probably also have had different or better findings, were it conducted over a longer period of time.

6.4 Concluding remarks

It seems as though play has a positive and progressive influence on high school art learners. There is an urgency to generate educators who are enthusiastic and willing to encourage their learners to play and embrace both the discoveries and failures of creating, in order to learn and grow through the process. By creating a safe environment for learners, they can freely approach the making of art through experimentation and being allowed to explore. So, new-found excitement for the visual arts could perhaps emerge from the next generation of high school art learners.

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Addenda

Addendum A: Consent form template



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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are invited to take part in a study conducted by Nicla Botha, from the Department of Visual Arts at Stellenbosch University in accordance with the Masters in Art Education degree.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate creative play by interviewing South African high school art educators, explore how art practice related to play have recently adapted to a digital learning space and what can be done to further encourage play.

2. WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF ME?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with the investigator, Nicla Botha. This will take the form of a semi-structured interview with an estimated time of 30 minutes. The interview will be recorded (audio only) and will transpire digitally, over Zoom or Google Meets.

Furthermore you will be asked to take part in an online 'play' workshop where creative play techniques will be shared which could then be included in your virtual and in-person art classroom. The workshop will be approximately 30-40 minutes and will transpire online, via Zoom or Google Meets. The workshop will take place as a group with willing participants; however because of different schedules and availability, it can also transpire individually.

3. POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The participant may experience very slight inconvenience from taking time out of their schedule for the interview and workshop. However, the interview and workshop will be arranged at the most convenient date and time for the participant. The participant will be afforded the opportunity to pause and continue the interview at a later stage should it be necessary. For the workshop participants will have to provide their own materials, yet this can be any found materials and need not inconvenience the participant.

4. POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO THE SOCIETY

By examining play in high school art practices, the research hopes to expound on the benefits of creative play on learner development and artistic abilities. I hope that the participant will profit from the study as they are given the opportunity to reflect on how play forms a part of their current teaching methods and how it can be incorporated more in the future, especially with online learning. The play techniques shared in the workshop can be implemented with the educator's own learners in the future.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants in this study will not be compensated.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information you share during this study and that could possibly identify you as a participant will be protected. The participant's name will not be revealed. Confidentiality will be maintained in the publication by addressing each participant as a code, for example Participant 1 [P1].

The data collected will be stored on a password protected laptop and backed up on an external hard drive for the duration of the research. All the participant data will be erased within a year after the thesis is concluded. The researcher, Nicla Botha, and if needed the research supervisor, will have access to the data. The semi-structured interview that will be audio-recorded can be reviewed, per request by the participant. Participants may choose to no longer disclose their information at any stage during the research process.

The results of the study will be published in the Master's thesis of Nicla Botha at the Stellenbosch University.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You may choose whether to be in this study or not. If you agree to take part in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this study if you were unavailable to take part in the study.

8. RESEARCHERS' CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Nicla Botha at 0845981292 or nicla.botha@gmail.com and/or the supervisor Neeske Alexander at neeskealexander@gmail.com.

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouché@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARTICIPANT

As the participant I confirm that:

- I have read the above information and it is written in a language that I am comfortable with.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- All issues related to privacy, and the confidentiality have been explained.

By signing below, I _____ agree to take part in this research study, as conducted by Nicla Botha.

Signature of Participant

Date

DECLARATION BY THE INVESTIGATOR

As the investigator, I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the participant. I also declare that the participant has been encouraged (and has been given ample time) to ask any questions. In addition the conversation was conducted in either English or Afrikaans according to the participant's preference and no translator is required.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Addendum B: Interview guide

Introduction

- Greet the educator and explain the objectives for the interview.
- Provide a brief background and context to the study.
- Explain what is meant by 'play' in this study.
- Mention the potential impact/value of the study for South African art education as well as for the participant.

Points of discussion

- What is the first word/thing you think of when the word 'play' is mentioned?
- What do you think are the effects of artistic play in the art classroom?
- In your classroom, how have you noticed creative/artistic play forming part of the learner's art making processes?
- How have you presented and encouraged play in the classroom or been unable to do so?
- What do you think is keeping your learners from approaching art making with a sense of play?
- With the move to a virtual classroom because of Covid-19, how did you go about teaching art?
- How has the shift to online learning impact the learners' artworks and artistic abilities?
- What do you think can be done to improve play in high school art education (with online and in-person pedagogy)?
- After everything discussed what are your final personal thoughts and opinions on play in high school art education in South Africa?

Closing

- Summarise the main point of the discussion and allow the participant to add any final comments.
- Invite the participant to contact the researcher if they think of anything to include or alter of what has been discussed.
- Thank the educator for their participation and time.

Addendum C: Participant permission template



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(please replace with school letterhead)

Herby I, _____, the principal of _____ allow
Nicla Botha to conduct research for her Masters in Art Education degree by means of an
interview and workshop with an art educator of the school.

I accept that no learners will be included in the study. Once agreed to take part in the study,
a consent form must be signed by the participating educator. I acknowledge that neither the
educator's identity nor the school's name will be disclosed in the thesis.

Signature of Principal

Date

Addendum D: Invitation Email

To whom it may concern,

I am currently a Masters in Art Education student at Stellenbosch University and wish to conduct research for my thesis by engaging with art educators from schools in the Western Cape. The research per participant will take the form of a 30minute interview and a short 30-40minute workshop. As my research topic is centred on creative play in high school art education, the interview will relate to the educator's perspective of play in their classroom and the challenges of online learning. The workshop will be a fun activity and aims to realise how play can practically be increased in a high school art context and especially with online education. (More information can be found in the attached document).

Furthermore for ethical purposes I require permission from the principal to allow my study to include a visual art educator from your school. Therefore if the educator agrees to take part in the study, I kindly request an official permission letter from the school with the principal's signature. (I have attached a template of a letter that can be completed and sent back to me). A consent form for the participant will be sent at a later stage.

Attached is a short summary of my research topic and the participant requirements, as well as a letter from the head lecturer of the MAVA (Art Education) degree to confirm my status as a Stellenbosch University student.

I hope to hear back from you soon. Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information.

Kind regards.

Nicla Botha

Addendum E: Workshop guide

The workshop will take place online via Zoom or Google Meets. This will be in a group setting with all the participants, unless requested for individual workshops because of availability, schedule clashes etc.

The aim of the workshop is to conduct a fun, interactive session where the educators can gain ideas for incorporating and allowing play in their classrooms. The workshop also creates a platform for participants to share alternative play ideas among other art educators. Not all the methods shared/mentioned will necessarily be executed in the workshop because of limited time and resources.

Introduction

- Greet the educator(s)
- Again explain what is meant by 'play' within this study.
- Explain the objectives of the workshop to share ideas of how play can be incorporated (more) within high school art practice, for both in-person and online pedagogy.

Activities

Practical:

- Invite the participants to make themselves comfortable as they wish behind their screens, sitting, standing, allowing space around them. Since it is an online workshop the researcher will not be able to provide art materials. Yet for the purpose of the workshop any materials can be used, e.g. scrap paper with any drawing medium, any found materials, etc.
- Share play methods from my experience as an art student as well as further research and allow participants to attempt it (not all the methods will be attempted in the workshop, yet all will be mentioned). Such as:
 - Make a quick drawing of the first thing that comes to mind or anything you see in the room with you.
 - Draw the same object/scene now using big arm movements to let the body loosen up and imagination flow.
 - Take one material and see how many different things (types of mark making, textures, tear, cut, fold, stretch, etc.) you can do with than one material.
 - Use a material, medium or tool you have never used before and experiment with it.
 - If using colour for a project, as an experiment, pick one colour and see how many different shades you can mix of that colour.
 - Although through play one could reach a 'final' artwork, I have found that most often the time of play leads to a 'final' idea which is then pursued to create the artwork.

- When it comes to specific or focussed projects, write down as many words as you can that associate to the project topic. Then see how these words link, what stand out to you
- For the workshop, let participants write down all the words they associate to a word e.g. tree. See how everyone's thought patterns differ relating to that one word.
- Writing down key thoughts, phrases and words throughout the process of creating an artwork can help to clarify your thoughts but also remind one of ideas you have not explored yet.
- Collaborate, share ideas with the group (class or peers) and build on each other's ideas.
 - In a school context, do collaborative artworks where every learner has a turn to draw/paint/leave their mark. (tape all over class)
 - Importance of critiquing each other's work

If time allows: Theory idea:

- Describe taste/smell/feel of something in detail
- 30 seconds (-entertainment)
- Museums/ gallery visits

Closing

- Allow time for the educators to share their alternative play ideas with the group, which we can attempt.
- Participants will be asked to send photographs of their activities to me for documentation as part of data collection.
- Invite the participants to contact me if they have any further comments or queries in about the study.
- Thank the educators for their participation and time.

Addendum F: Proof of editing

HESTER HONEY

LANGUAGE CONSULTANT
91 BRANDWACHT STREET, STELLENBOSCH 7600
TELEPHONE / FAX 021 886 4541
E-mail: hestermh@netactive.co.za

This is to confirm that I have edited the mini thesis presented for the degree of
Master of Visual Arts (Art Education)

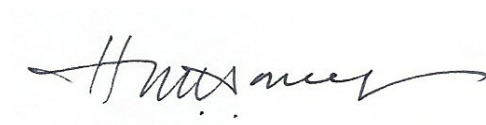
by

NICLA BOTHA

titled

**Three high school educators' views on the influence of play on learners, with a
focus on the current shift to online learning – a case study in the Western
Cape of South Africa**

and have made suggestions to be implemented by the candidate.



H M Honey

(20/10/2021)