AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN

ANDRAGOGY AND HONG KONG STUDENTS' APPROACHES TO

LEARNING IN PERFORMING ARTS EDUCATION:

A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ANDRAGOGY AND HONG KONG STUDENTS' APPROACHES TO LEARNING IN PERFORMING ARTS EDUCATION:

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This case study, based on students in the Applied Arts department of an academy in Hong Kong, investigates the relationship between andragogy and student approaches to learning by looking at the curriculum delivery and how the student approaches to learning affect the outcome.

Hong Kong is an international city at the intersection between Chinese and Western cultures. Whilst its most recent past has been influenced by western culture, its origin is derived from traditional Chinese culture. For its part, The Academy is in a unique position to make a strong contribution to the development of performing arts both in China and Hong Kong. Established by Ordinance in 1984 in response to the city's growing need to develop arts and arts education, the Academy holds a strategic position capable of bridging Chinese and Western culture.

The curriculum follows the model of an American performing arts school – a model based on Western teaching and learning styles and one that requires andragogical approaches and interactive participation in the creative process. In contrast to this approach, Academy students are recipients of pedagogical practices that value analytical abilities over self-exploration. They learn through second language instruction, delivered in a way that is unfamiliar to them.

Data collection focused on the Applied Arts department of the School of Technical Arts and involved students and faculty members. Through an interpretative paradigm it set out to discover whether a fundamental change to the curriculum is required.

The outcome of the research revealed that students have difficulties reconciling their inherent learning styles with the curriculum content and implementation. Requiring them to break away from a familiar and comfortable mode of learning, to a style of learning that requires them to learn with understanding and personal control over the process, is a jump that creates much difficulty. The general consensus revealed that The Academy should move away from the present American model and develop an independent system that will acknowledge the natural and engrained learning styles of the students and adopt educational philosophies that are more suitable for Hong Kong.

CONTENTS

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   THE FOCUS OF THE STUDY

Elliot Eisner, who is known particularly for his work in arts education, advocates:

> *"No single educational programme is appropriate for all students everywhere, forever."* Eisner, [1985, p.v].

He is referring to students' characteristics, the context in which they live, and the values they possess and which the community embraces. It is differences in values, Eisner points out, that can have a profound effect on the educational process, as students bring to the encounter specific learning approaches and objectives and a collection of experiences, skills, and knowledge that influence how new ideas are perceived, how new techniques are amassed and how the instruction of teachers is interpreted.

Biggs, an educational psychologist and novelist concurs with Eisner:

> *"What people construct from a learning encounter depends on their motives and intentions, on what they know already and on how they use their prior knowledge."* [1999, p.13.]

What Biggs implies here suggests that it is not possible to predict with utmost authority how students respond to and interpret curricula material. Yet if we were to have a better understanding of these responses and interpretations, we might be better equipped to facilitate a given learning process and ultimately create a better relationship between andragogy and students' approaches to learning.

Andragogy and students' approaches to learning are the subjects of this research. The investigation took place within the context of performing arts education at a tertiary level institution in Hong Kong. The study examined the nature of the teaching and learning processes and the education values they reflect. The research used a case study approach, the case being a performing arts Academy in Hong Kong, [refer to page 11], which for the purpose of this research will be called 'The Academy'. The intention of the study was to determine the nature of the relationship between andragogical approaches used and students' approaches to learning. Of particular concern was the goodness of fit between these elements. The study, therefore, adopted an evaluative approach, the intention of which was to identify potential ways of improving the quality of teaching and learning in The Academy.

According to The Academy's Ordinance [1984] its mandate is to:

"Foster and provide for training, education and research in the performing and related technical arts". Its mission is to: *"fulfill the unique role of nurturing artistic talents and the professional training of performers and artists to enable them to contribute to their profession and to the community at large."* p.64

The Academy is not restricted by the imposition of any standardized teaching methods, particularly those seen in the primary and secondary school system in Hong Kong. However it does have all the complications of a socially heterogeneous institution caused by the cultural diversity, philosophical differences, language barriers and varying educational backgrounds of the staff and students. This diversity poses a variety of challenges that are reflected in the educational experience.

The research concentrated on students from the Applied Arts department, with the intention to explore the teaching-learning process. It is hoped that the findings will not only offer an important perspective on the effectiveness of the teaching and learning that takes place in this particular institution, but that they will also contribute to the broader understanding of teaching and learning.

In the Western hemisphere investigation of curriculum suitability has involved an ongoing debate. The general feeling drawn from educational research seems to be that the design of the curriculum should in the main be dependant on how the role of education is seen within a society. As Albert & Triandis, [1985, p.321] point out, *"one of the main purposes of education is to prepare an individual to function effectively in his or her environment"*, and *"it would be wrong"*, as Blenkin, Edwards and Kelly [1992, p.16] identify, *"not to accept that the curriculum should be planned, at least in part, to help young people to learn to live in the society into which they have been born."*

The planning of any curriculum is likely to be complex; after all we are dealing not least with the characteristics of the learners, the societal and organizational culture and the policies of the institution. There are many layers to be considered and as Dimmock [1998] points out,

"Education, as an essentially human activity, is culture-bound. Policy makers and school leaders, therefore, need to be mindful of societal and organizational cultural characteristics when formulating, adopting and implementing policies. The prospect of successful implementation is enhanced when policy makers and school administrators adopt policies consonant with the characteristics of the prevailing societal culture." p.367.

Intercultural research identifies a potentially problematic mixing of educational and cultural policies and processes, as misunderstandings stemming from the clash of different cultural beliefs may occur, ultimately affecting the quality and overall success or failure of the educational process.

This research aimed to identify the difficulties or problems, strengths and/or weaknesses of the teaching/learning process. The study endeavoured to dissect existing hypothesis and help to point the way forward for a more effective teaching and learning outcome. Cooper and McIntyre [1996] in their research on classroom strategies for effective teaching and learning talk about the 'blind alleys' encountered by those researchers who too readily make assumptions about the nature of effective teaching. As they point out, it is less easy to see the blind alleys of the present than those of the past and suggest:

"The way forward must be one which recognizes the dangers of making assumptions about what happens in classrooms or what effective teaching involves and which takes as its starting point the attempt to understand what people in classrooms are trying to do, and how they go about trying to do it effectively." p.3

The training offered at The Academy is based on the assumption that effective teaching is modeled on an imported educational system. Bearing in mind the long history in the west of performing and technical arts training, one might accept this as an appropriate hypothesis. Fisher & Levine, [1989] however, warn of the dangers that this approach might have on the local culture.

"There may be a temptation to import ready-made plans from outside but the danger here is that no written plan can fully convey all that is expected of a curriculum." p.67

Dimmock [1998] also expresses some skepticism about the importation of education. His concerns refer to cultural issues.

"Importation of policy raises important questions about its appropriateness for indigenous cultures." p.363

Dimmock highlights how the mixing of cultural policies and processes could be potentially problematic, resulting in misunderstandings stemming from cross-cultural beliefs that not only impede effective interaction between teacher and student but ultimately affect the quality assurance and the overall success or failure of the educational process.

So how would one point the way forward in an investigation of the teaching and learning of Applied Artist at The Academy? Dissecting the teaching and learning methodologies has to be the first step, identifying misunderstandings and unsuitable methodologies follows and finally identifying necessary changes in the system.

1.2   ANDRAGOGY

Over the years there has been quite a transformation into the research of how teaching can be provided and how people learn. Traditionally education was seen as an academic relationship between the teacher and the learner where the teacher decided what the learner needed to know and also how that knowledge would be taught. Andragogy was one approach that was introduced for improving educational methodology. The theory of andragogy, which relates to a model of learning that is associated with the characteristics of adult learners, is a framework for thinking about what adults want to learn and how they should go about that learning. It is based firstly on the assumption that adults are self-directed and independent learners, and secondly that the teacher is the facilitator of learning for students to learn through discussion or problem solving, rather than the teacher as the deliverer of content. Knowles [1970] who in the minds of many involved in the field of adult education is inextricably associated with andragogy, describes andragogy as *"the art and science of helping adults learn"* As he explains, it tends to sit at the opposite end of the spectrum to pedagogy in that it encourages divergent thinking and active learning, rather than convergent thinking and controlled learning. With andragogy, teaching and learning roles can be blurred with adult students striving for independence and control over the learning in an encounter where both the learner and the facilitator interact and influence each other. Andragogical approaches as described by The Nottingham Andragogy Group [1983] suggest that students should be encouraged to think critically, feel independent, take control of the learning and be confident enough not to accept or be influenced by the interpretation of others. Brookfield [1986] explains the Nottingham Andragogy group's assumptions as being very close to his explanation of andragogy:

> *"To the Nottingham group, andragogy regards adults as social beings, products of history and culture; that is, adults are contextually located. In adulthood individuals acquire the capacity to think creatively and critically by integrating affective and cognitive dimensions of learning in group and individual settings."* p.38

Brown, H.W. [1985] associates andragogy with lateral thinking - a way of problem solving in adulthood. He defines lateral thinking, creative thinking and conceptualization as a restructuring of the knowledge a person already has in order to bring about new ideas and insights. On this basis he incorporates lateral thinking into the andragogical process as a mechanism to promote problem-solving abilities.

Knowles' theory of andragogy initially compared very closely to that of Alexander Kapp, who in 1833 used it to describe elements of Plato's education theory. Andragogy [*andr-* meaning 'man'] is contrasted

with pedagogy [*paid* - meaning 'child' and *agogos* meaning 'leading']. See Davenport 1993: 114. Kapp's use of andragogy, however, was disputed and fell into disuse. Over the years it was re-developed and has evolved and to some extent been influenced by Knowles and other writers' thinking and discussions on the subject. The general understanding in relation to the theory of andragogy remains as an alternative teaching and learning approach that relies on the capability of adults in a self-directed learning process - a process that attempts to move the learner to an independent learning situation.

Andragogy has throughout the years faced much debate and criticism. There have also been other methodologies introduced. Alternative approaches such are heutagogy which took andragogy one-step further and which has been classified as the study of self-determined learning. There is humanagogy classified as a holistic approach to adult education. There is gerogogy referred to as lifelong learning in adult years. There is anthropogogy, which is a term used to utilize both andragogy and pedagogy and eldergogy, a specialized approach to education for elders. Of all these theories however, there remains little debate that the most dominant form of instruction remains pedagogy which until recently was used as a model for teaching both children and adults. Knowles [1984] refers to pedagogy as a teaching and learning situation that actively promotes dependency on the instructor and andragogy as a model of assumptions about adult learners to be used alongside the pedagogical model of assumptions:

> *"Andragogy is simply another model of assumptions about adult learners to be used alongside the pedagogical model of assumptions, thereby providing two alternative models for testing out the assumptions as to their 'fit' with particular situations. Furthermore, the models are probably most useful when seen not as dichotomous but rather as two ends of a spectrum, with a realistic assumption [about learners] in a given situation falling in between the two ends".* [Knowles, 1980, p.43]

In looking back over the years the theory of andragogy has indeed experienced a roller coaster ride. Whilst it appears to have been accepted universally, it is also true to say that it has received little mention and less educational debate over the past 20 years. As Kapp's use of andragogy fell into disuse in the 1800's so did Knowles in the 1900's. However, despite its apparent back seat role in the educational arena, it does nevertheless, of all the different 'gogy's' available to this research, remain the most relevant model and set of assumptions for the research to associate with. This theory is based on the assumption that it relates closely to the theory of performing arts education. This can best be described as a vehicle for self-expression that works on the assumption that those involved are striving to learn independently and to be able to think critically and creatively and often in an uncertain environment.

Andragogy can be seen as initiating debate, dialogue and change in terms of instructional approaches. It also has useful approaches for moving from the didactic, traditional teacher-directed approach of pedagogy to a less submissive role that encourages the student to be more independent and responsible. Andragogy is able to make the distinction between how adults and students learn and relies on the values of self-directed and independent learning. It is an approach that, whilst to an extent at odds with the traditional teacher-centred pedagogy widely accepted in Hong Kong, does nevertheless reflect a teacher-learner relationship that is familiar to the Hong Kong student.

Whilst the theory of this approach makes its concept so relevant to this study, as it relates closely to how education in the performing arts is perceived, it is important to consider whether the theory of andragogy and the expectations and educational goals set by The Academy are appropriate and indeed realistic, and whether the students in this study can make the academic shift from pedagogy to andragogy, as referred to by Knowles, that will engender the educational goals set by The Academy.

1.3 BACKGROUND TO STUDY

The Academy recruits students from a common pool of school certificate holders and matriculates, many of whom may have little prior experience in any of the performing arts disciplines. Their pre-tertiary education is traditional in nature and principally arranged for handling large numbers of students en masse. Conducted in the Cantonese dialect of the Chinese language and based on the lecture model, classes are conducted by teachers working from compendious notes. In contrast to this approach, education at The Academy is arranged for small numbers of students in an intimate environment. Conducted extensively in the English language it is based on a model reflecting the values and organizational patterns of comparative performing arts institutions in the United States, the philosophy of which is to concentrate on the act of individualizing students to become distinctive beings in a classroom culture where the student's activity becomes the premise for learning, rather than the teacher's activity of delivering information. This imported educational policy is based primarily on a teaching and learning methodology that is reliant on confidence and independence, with an emphasis on expression of judgment, self-mastery, originality and all-round personal development.

As The Academy's Ordinance [1984] explains:

> *"The Academy bestows upon the student, the responsibility for developing their talent and ideas to their full potential by being open minded, sensitive, passionate and dedicated to their chosen specialization."* p.34

Placing the responsibility of education on The Academy student whose prior educational experience has been in Hong Kong primary and secondary schools poses considerable challenges for all but the most self-confident students. It requires the students to make an immediate shift away from a prescribed learning strategy that has them focused on the concrete and literal aspects of task components, reproducible through rote learning, to an andragogical approach that focuses on meaning, maximizing understanding and encouraging curiosity and exploration. Students are expected, often for the first time, to become personally involved in tasks and concentrate on the underlying meaning instead of the literal aspects.

Undoubtedly there are virtues and strengths in all educational systems. However, the expectation by The Academy for students to make an almost immediate shift from the Hong Kong Chinese traditional pre-tertiary pedagogical approach, to a tertiary level andragogical approach, could be considered questionable.

1.4 HONG KONG'S HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

As a former colony of a western power, Hong Kong has been a meeting place where contrasting cultures have met, and where the colonial power has imposed imported cultural values and practices on the indigenous people. It came under British rule as a result of the first Anglo-Chinese war, in 1839/40, a status that was officially confirmed by the treaty of Nanking, 1842. From then, until 1997, its historical and political surroundings resulted in it being influenced by, or indeed dominated by Western culture. Its cultural roots, however, emanated largely from Cantonese opera, which had flourished prior to the 1840's, and more recently films, which prospered in the 1950s and 60s. There were of course, also the many Chinese festivals and the oldest of the Chinese theatre arts – puppets. The British colonial government neither supported nor discouraged the development of local culture, but in 1950 when the border was closed between Hong Kong and China, the direct flow of Chinese cultural influence slowed down. As a result, although the economy began to pick up, cultural opportunities diminished.

However, by 1973, when Hong Kong's baby boom generation was growing up, the economy underwent rapid economic growth and society began to demand a more active cultural scene, [Hong Kong Government [HKG] Year Book 1975, hereafter given as HKG Year Book]. By the 1980's things were beginning to flourish and with the support of the government and the then Urban Council, its 'cultural hardware' developed rapidly. A professional theatre and a professional dance company were established, the Hong Kong Philharmonic and the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestras gained professional status, the Hong Kong Arts Festival and the International Film Festival were established and a number of new arts venues were built. At this time, 1982, the Government established the

Council for the Performing Arts and promoted participation in the arts through low-ticket price tickets and low venue charges. [HKG Year Book, 1980/82] However, efforts towards cultural 'software', such as audience development and particularly arts education, did not match those of 'hardware' development. Then in 2000, the Culture and Heritage Commission was established to address the issue of a long-term cultural policy. Whilst the arts scene continues to develop today, progress in arts education continues to be slow and tends to lack any real position in Hong Kong's primary or secondary education system. [HKG Year Book 2002]

1.4.1   Language Policy in Hong Kong

Historically in Hong Kong, *"English has been the unquestioned language of rule"*, Wright, Kelly Holmes, [1997] cite Coulmas, [1996, p.21] who describes how the extensive use of English language led to it becoming equal to the Chinese. The Language Ordinance of 1974 gave the two languages equivalent ranking for communication between the government and the general population. The Government used English as a working language, the Hong Kong Legislative Council debated in English and English was used in business, finance, law, science and technology. Cantonese speakers desired to learn English as a means to prevent them from being severed from sovereignty, both political and economic. This influenced language use in education, and students looking for future social and economic success demanded English language instruction. [Wright, Kelly-Holmes 1997, p.3]

However, the transition of Hong Kong from a British colony into the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China [PRC] in 1997 brought about a new political situation and the use of English unfortunately has steadily decreased. Daily business and political conversations in English with London have been replaced by the use of Putonghua the official language of China. Now a strong need to learn Putonghua can be observed, for the same reasons as there had been a need before 1997 to learn English. [Wright Kelly-Holmes 1997, p.6]

1.5   HONG KONG'S EDUCATION POLICY.

Education has become the single largest item of public expenditure, accounting for one-fifth of the total recurrent public expenditure, [HK Government Year Book 2006] Education is considered a powerful influence and excessive pressure is placed on students to do well. All students are in a compulsory education system for a period of at least nine years. This was implemented after the riots in 1967, seen as a spill over from the Cultural Revolution that had erupted on the mainland a year earlier. The riots prompted the Colonial administration to introduce sweeping social reforms, which included the introduction of nine-years compulsory education. Beyond the ninth year education is

taken up by more that 90% of the students leading to a public examination after the eleventh year. Access to further education, leading to the higher-level public examination, is presently taken up by a further 35% of students. At the higher education level, public resources account for one-third of the government's total expenditure on education. All of this reflects a structure that was implemented in the 1970's and is now well established. [Education and Manpower Bureau [EMB], 2006].

The school system consists primarily of the public sector, which is non-profit making, funded largely by the Government and is mainly offered to Chinese-speaking students taught through the medium of Chinese. There is a private school sector, which is profit-making, mainly for Chinese-speaking students and up until recently, taught through the medium of English. There is also the English-speaking English Schools Foundation [ESF] as well as a variety of international schools. The Academy endeavours to draw from all sectors, the public sector, the private sector and also the ESF and international section. However the majority of the student intake [91%] is a product of the Hong Kong public sector.

1.5.1 Pre-Tertiary Education System

Primary and secondary education presently provides a twelve-year curriculum leading to the Hong Kong Certificate of Education examination [HKCEE], equivalent to the General Certificate of Secondary Education [GCSE] in the United Kingdom. The syllabi as prescribed by the Hong Kong Department of Education fosters good memorization skills, a phenomenon that whilst also present, to a greater or lesser degree, everywhere in the western world, tends to be heavily criticized for teaching students how to master the art of scoring top grades in examinations and is considered to be lacking an incentive for innovative, independent and critical thinking. Nevertheless the Hong Kong education system attracts very positive comments from professional educational critics, as Cheng and Wong [1996] point out:

> *"In almost all the writings about education in East Asia, there are the common observations of remarkable achievements, hardworking ethics and orderly behaviour among students."* p.32

Education at pre-tertiary level is extensive in its content. The breadth, scope and quantity of the materials that the teacher is required to cover in each class session leaves little if any time for discussion and questions. The focus tends to be on the storing of information rather than engaging young minds. Students are periodically tested from a very young age and their achievement is measured in terms of reproducing facts or implementing memorized procedures and formulae from the teacher's notes. The system is implicitly dependent on examinations as a means of measuring attainment with the result that a student's future is to a large extent dictated by his/her capacity to

perform in formal tests.   Hong Kong schools, whilst not dissimilar to schools around the world are ranked on the basis of examination results. Teachers reflect this as Tang and Biggs [1996] cite Morris, *"Hong Kong secondary teachers see their allotted task as maximizing their students' results in the public examinations."* [1985, p.160].

After much lobbying from Hong Kong's public and private sectors, the 12-year curriculum described above is finally under debate and a new syllabus is presently under review. Considerations are aimed at offering students more liberal studies within an extended one year, which the HKED suggests, *"will enable students to think more and to know more about their environment"* [HK Gov. 2006 May 2000, p.31]. The Educational Department also aims to put further emphasis on English and Putonghua to better prepare students for their future.

The scope of the arts curriculum in both primary and secondary schools is narrow and tends to be restricted to classes in music and drawing.   The content tends to concentrate on academic memorization and imitation over aesthetic appreciation and creativity**.**   The guidelines for arts classes as stipulated by the HKED, [HKG Year Book, 2000], advocates an aggregate of 10-15% of school hours at primary level and 8-10% at junior level. There is no clear-cut guideline for senior secondary level, but data suggests that approximately 30% of the schools do not provide the opportunity for any arts classes at all.

Before 1993, secondary schools in Hong Kong were free to decide on the language of instruction and then in 1993, the Government published a statement in a document entitled: "School Education in Hong Kong: A Statement of Aims" encouraging all schools to adopt Cantonese [the Chinese dialect most common in Hong Kong] as the language of instruction.

> *"While schools are free to decide which language - Chinese [Cantonese] or English - to use as the medium of instruction, they are encouraged to adopt Chinese, since this will in general lead to more effective teaching and learning."* [1993, p.8.]

This statement was the beginning of a long drive on the part of the Government for schools to switch to mother-tongue instruction, a drive that has subsequently developed into a debate still raging today. Wright and Kelly-Holmes [1997] commented on the language system:

> *"English still appears the language of international success, even with the impending political change. This has led parents to complain vociferously when the opportunities for English study are reduced."* p.19.

The debate is on-going. From September 1998, only 114 of the 421 public sector schools were allowed to continue teaching in English and the remaining 307 were instructed to use Cantonese. In order to cope with students' decreased level of English language ability, schools have started switching to mother tongue instruction, and as a final measure the Government is now debating the option of requiring all schools to teach in Cantonese. [Education and Manpower Bureau [EMB], 2004]. If this goes ahead it will have a profound effect on the language ability of students entering tertiary level education, where instruction will remain in the English language.

1.5.2   Tertiary Level Education

It was in 1989 that the Government commenced the expansion of the provision of tertiary level institutions in Hong Kong. This was prompted partly as a result of the public outcry over the Tiananmen Square crackdown and partly because of concern raised by the increasing exodus of professionals apprehensive about the future of Hong Kong.   Furthermore, one million people, their confidence undermined before the return of sovereignty with China, took to the streets of Hong Kong to protest against the lack of places at tertiary level.

As a result of this action there are now eight universities within a radius of 750 sq km. The majority of them cater for students who wish to study architecture, business, finance, law and technology. Art courses are very limited in their scope and number. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and the Baptist University offer some courses in music, art, design and creative media at diploma and degree level. The Chinese University admits approximately 20 students a year for visual art courses, whilst the University of Hong Kong offers around 15 places per year to students in the area of art history. The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts [HKAPA] is the only institution that provides a significant number of places, around 100 per year, for training in performing and technical arts.

1.6   OVERVIEW OF THE ACADEMY.

Established by Ordinance in 1984, The Academy is the only tertiary level institution for professional training and education in both Chinese and Western performing and technical arts. This it does through a full range of professional, creative and scholarly activities in the performing and related technical arts subjects. It models itself as a close-to-professional situation as possible, in a building with a variety of sophisticated, state of the art venues, all of which were purpose-built for different types of performance/productions and varying audience sizes.

The Academy is relatively small with a defined community that involves close social interaction. It comprises six different schools coexisting and interacting within the same complex. These are the five

performing schools: Dance, Drama, Music, Film & Television, Chinese Traditional Theatre, and the sixth school, the school of Technical Arts. The total student population is approximately 700. 91% of students are local in origin, having graduated from the Hong Kong secondary school system. 9% are non-local students, mainly from Asia. Only 1.3% are from the West. The principal programmes lead to the awards of Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Professional Diploma and Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Fine Arts [Honours] Degree in Performing Arts and related Technical Arts. A Master of Fine Arts was implemented in 2007.

1.6.1   The Department of Applied Arts

The School of Technical Arts, which is pivotal to the performance training of the above mentioned performance schools, consists of five departments: Stage Management, Sound, Lighting, Design and Applied Arts. The department of Applied Arts is the youngest of the five departments. It houses excellent, fully equipped props, scenic art workshop spaces and wardrobe facilities, and thus the training is very practical in nature. The department was established in 1990 and at the time offered Certificate programmes only. It gained degree status in 1997, some five years after the other four departments and at a crucial time in the history of Hong Kong. The youngest department, nevertheless is the largest and has three specialization pathways: Costume Technology, Property Making and Scenic Art. The department gives emphasis to multi-skill training, and although students are expected to specialize in one of the three pathways, they are encouraged to develop skills in the other two areas. These skills are taught initially in a classroom environment and then practiced and developed in a real life situation as students are assigned as a team member to work on the 15-20 theatre productions that take place each academic year. The programme is demanding by any standards and the technological nature of the curriculum requires constant monitoring, development and exp0ansion of courses in order to respond to the ever-changing needs of the performing and technical arts industries in Hong Kong and elsewhere. In comparison to the Hong Kong pre-tertiary education system, the Applied Arts curriculum requires students to make perhaps the most rigorous adjustment in training philosophies. It is for this reason and the points mentioned above, that the department of Applied Arts has been chosen as the case study for this research.

1.7   THEORETRICAL FRAMEWORK

In his discussions on understanding and facilitating learning, Brookfield [1986] points out:

> "……. *every learning group contains a configuration of idiosyncratic personalities, all with different past experiences and current orientations, all at different levels of readiness for learning, and all possessing individually developed learning styles.* p.122

If teachers are to assist in the learning process, they need to become familiar with the qualities that Brookfield refers to, and rather than prescribe any standardized approach to learning, we should research the goodness of fit between the educational requirements of the institution and the student approaches to learning.

Fig. 1.1

Theoretical Framework

1.8 ADOPTING CHANGE IN THE CURRICULUM

Change is one of the most important features of any innovative educational institution as it addresses the challenges of students and society's needs in a rapidly changing world. Globalization and new technologies have revolutionized economic and social structures, and lifelong learning has become a necessity for individuals as well as for society. Educational institutions around the world are compelled to address these changes. Blenkin, Edwards and Kelly [1992] recognize these technological changes but also remind us:

> *"If education is to respond in some way……… it must at the same time respond to the moral, social and political change which is an integral part of it."* p.17

With respect to technological change, The Academy is no different from any other educational institution around the globe. The difference lies in the fact that it must also consider the unique social and political changes which have been the result of Hong Kong's transition in 1997 from a British Colony into the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region [HKSAR] of the Peoples Republic of China [PRC] as part of the 'one country, two systems' policy. Hong Kong has embarked on a new path in history. As it begins to face two paradoxical forces, the situation allows new opportunities in

the education system as well as raising new questions. For its part, The Academy celebrated the 20th anniversary of its inauguration. The subsequent changes that have taken place within society have given rise to issues in respect of not just The Academy's philosophical and cultural traditions, but also its teaching and learning methodologies. It is therefore timely to examine its role within this very unique changing society. Whilst the results of this research are aimed specifically at the Department of Applied Arts, it is hoped that the results may also contribute to future considerations within the larger curriculum at The Academy and elsewhere.

In reviewing the education system Anthony Leung Kam-chung's, Chairman of the Hong Kong Education Commission, in a document entitled 'Education Blueprint for the 21st Century', Learning for Life Learning through Life [2000] wrote:

> *"The objective is to examine how the education system could be changed to provide the most favourable environment for teaching and learning, so that students can fully realize their potential and teachers can have more room to help students learn more effectively."* p.iv

Leung's message was directed at the primary and secondary education system. However, his words have a broader relevance and apply to this research as well. It is hoped that in identifying appropriate andragogy in relation to the teaching and learning objectives required of students at The Academy, that this research can contribute to already existing literature on andragogy and/or literature pertaining to the way Hong Kong Chinese students learn. In the event that the findings identify a teaching-learning process in which understanding, negotiation, collaboration and praxis are not being shared, then a significant contribution will have be made of how to embark on educational change to facilitate a more appropriate learning experience.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 RESEARCH OVERVIEW

As much research points out, students' characteristics, the environment in which they live and the values both they and the community embrace can have a profound effect on their learning outcome. The way students approach their learning is the result of a collection of their experiences, skills and knowledge and their approach can then influence how they interpret the instruction of teachers and the programme material as well as how they assemble new ideas and techniques. For a successful learning environment, therefore, it is necessary to understand the relationship between teaching and learning, for it is this relationship that can have a deep affect on the final outcome.

The uniqueness of this study is the focus on andragogy within the context of performing arts education at a tertiary institution in Hong Kong, where students learn through second language instruction in an area of study and a delivery of instruction that is unfamiliar to them. The investigation demanded research into a range of topics' analyzed from different perspectives. It demanded literature support from books and journals as well as government documentation and internet searches. The literature enabled the researcher to learn from previous investigations of similar topics and placed the inquiry into context. The area of enquiry and the rationale for discussion is set out below:

Table 2.1

Topics under Review and Rationale for Discussion

Topics under Review	Rationale for Discussion
Educational and cultural characteristics	To encourage a strategy that is in harmony with the characteristics of the organization and those of the societal and cultural characteristics of the people
Performing arts education	To develop independent, critical and creative thinking that underpins performing arts education
Teaching and learning process	To understand the role patterns, values and expectations of teachers and students
2nd Language instruction	To understand the linguistic challenges and how they affect the teaching and learning outcome
Andragogical approaches	To identify if the theory of andragogy and the expectations and educational goals set by The Academy are realistic
Educational change	Adopting educational change to facilitate a more appropriate learning experience

2.2   ROLE OF EDUCATION WITHIN SOCIETY

The role of education within a society brings us to Eisner's [1994] thoughts that no single educational programme is appropriate for all students everywhere forever. Widely considered the leading theorist on art education in the United States and elsewhere, Eisner's work proved a good place to commence the research because of his sensitivity to the way education fits within society.

Fullan [1999] also looks at educational situations by questioning the organization's understanding of an environment. His work was consulted because he has participated as a researcher and consultant in a wide range of educational change projects within school systems internationally. He advises:

> *"The learning organization must be dynamically plugged into its environment if it is to have any chance at all of surviving."* p.42.

Studies conducted by Cole [1971] Cole and Bruner [1971] and Scribner and Cole [1981] also highlight how our cognitive development is determined by the demands of the environment in which we grow up: they point out how we tend to be good at doing the things that are significant to us and that we apply often. They highlight how our cognitive aptitudes are entrenched in the belief systems of our society.

These so called cognitive aptitudes came under much criticism during the Colonial rule as the priority of Hong Kong's colonial schools as Friederichs [1988] reported was, *"to train the colonials for roles in the existing hierarchy."* [1988, p.193].   It was noted how the British education system took little notice of the day-to-day organization. In fact the system quite suited their objectives as it demanded obedience, control and restraint and produced graduates who, whilst hard working and ready to follow orders, lacked initiative and showed little curiosity. The work of Hofstede, [1980; 1991] and Hofstede and Bond, [1984] highlights the British education system by referring to what they labeled as the 'Power Dimension' [PD]. Hofstede's work was considered relevant to this study not least because of his understanding of Asian societies. His work discusses how Asian societies tend to be high PD cultures compared to many Western societies who have low PD values.   He explains this as a measurement of power distribution within a society and its organization. He defined it as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept power to be distributed unequally.   The more westernized the society becomes, he comments, the more likely it is to change from high to low PD. Hofstede [1980] reports how Hong Kong displays a high Power-Distance Index [PDI], ranking it 15th out of 50 countries. By contrast the USA is ranked 38th, Australia 41st and Britain 44th.   He claims that not only do most Asian societies traditionally

exhibit high PD, but also in the case of Hong Kong, the British colonial government further enhanced it.

Whether high PD raises concern for the Hong Kong Government is unclear, but in 1997, the date when the Chinese resumed sovereignty over Hong Kong Mr. Tung Chee Hwa, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR at the time, in his Policy Address called for a review of the educational system. During this address he recommended that education for the Hong Kong Chinese *"should be firmly rooted in the needs of Hong Kong."* He went on to validate this by saying, *"Ours is a cosmopolitan city and our ability to embrace the cultures of east and west is one of the secrets of our success*." In its first consultation paper released in 1999, the Cultural and Heritage Commission expressed a similar goal. Evaluating Hong Kong's tradition with that of China's, it reminds us how China's long history, *"offers a great treasure house for sustained development of Hong Kong culture"* and goes on to recommend that Chinese culture should underpin Hong Kong's global cultural vision, but should also draw on the spirit of other cultures. This, the paper identified, would *"develop Hong Kong into an international cultural metropolis known for its openness and pluralism"*. Since this first paper was published, discussions have taken place that have lead to a continuous review of Hong Kong's educational policy, and changes in the curriculum remain a hot debate.

The works of Blenkin, Edwards and Kelly [1992] and Albert & Triandis [1985] come into play here because of their belief in the need to prepare an individual to function effectively in his/her own society through a carefully planned curriculum. Dimmock's work [1998] also shows similar considerations by suggesting that policy makers and school leaders be aware of societal and organizational cultural characteristics when formulating, adopting and implementing policies. These works echo the main theory of this research.

2.3   THE ROLE OF CULTURE WITHIN EDUCATION.

If we accept that education plays a significant role in shaping culture and cultural identity, then it can be assumed that culture has an influence on the role that education plays in society. Bearing this in mind, it would therefore seem inappropriate to embark on a research study of this nature without giving due consideration to the way 'Culture' is defined.

The definition offered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, [UNESCO] in their article, What is Cultural Diversity? is broad and all enveloping. They define Culture as *"a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group. It encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, values systems, traditions and beliefs."* [http:// portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php.]   A narrower

definition of culture as considered by many people is limited to cultural and arts activities such as literature, dance, music, drama, visual and performance arts. The Chinese term for the word 'Culture' is 'Wen Hua' meaning the cultivation of knowledge, character and aesthetic sense, which mirrors the meaning of the Latin word "cultus" from which the English word "Culture" gets its origin.

So, on the one hand the definition can be broad and all enveloping and on the other narrow and limiting. Hofstede's definition of Culture that is particularly pertinent to this research is:

> *"patterns of thinking, feeling and acting underpinning the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another."* [1991, p.4-5]

He goes on to argue that, *"Culture is learned, not inherited, and that societal and organizational cultures are qualitatively different concepts."* [1991, p.366]

The study of different groups of people, their thinking, feeling and behaviour are all topics that have long been the subject of investigation in the West as well as in Hong Kong. For many generations psychologists, educators and philosophers have continually attempted to identify what makes up the unique thinking behind the mind – cultural identity, social and education background, how people learn and the conditions under which they learn. This thesis will not attempt to repeat the work of these researchers but will make use of their findings to assist in this case study.

2.4   CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

D'Andrade [1985, p.67] raises the question, *"can culture affect the way people perceive, reason, and feel?"* and conversely, *"is culture shaped by the way human cognitive processes work?"* To answer these questions the researcher consulted the work of Adler [1977] who explains:

> *"Every culture has its own internal coherence, integrity, and logic. Each is an intertwined system of values, attitudes, beliefs, and norms that give meaning and significance to both individual and collective identity. To varying degrees, all persons are culturally bound and conditioned. Within a particular culture, they derive a sense of identity and belonging, a guide for behaviour."* p. 22

Albert and Triandis [1985, p.328] clarify it in this way, *"A culture produces a particular pattern of assumptions about the way the world is structured"* but as Copeland [1985] cautions, these patterns can often become mystified when unfamiliar values are introduced.

"Countless hazards are created by communication problems, cultural differences in motivational and value systems, diverse codes of conduct, even differences in orientation to fundamentals such as perception of time and space." p.49

As Albert and Triandis [1985] explain in their research,

"When individuals from one culture are forced to adopt a very different cultural pattern, they are likely to experience high levels of stress, a reduction in positive outcomes, lower self-esteem, anomie, and general demoralization." p.321

They go on to say:

"Most of the elements comprising the behaviour patterns and subjective cultures of an ethnic group can be shown to be functional for the particular environment in which that cultural group has existed for a long time." p.321

As Albert & Triandis point out, the first step to being receptive to students is to understand their feelings, affections, and emotions. Only by creating empathy and establishing a dialogue with them will it be possible to feel and show solidarity, tolerance, and fairness. Their theories suggest that whilst certain behavioural patterns will appear to be acceptable to one cultural group, they may appear totally unacceptable to another, so when teacher and student come together from different cultural backgrounds as they do at The Academy, confusion may arise. We can then either choose to bridge the cross-cultural gap or ignore it. In choosing to try to bridge it the research turned again to the work of Geert Hofstede [1986]. Hofstede substantiates Albert and Triandis' thinking to clarify that even though the world over we appear the same, in fact people of other cultures tend to behave differently. He points out:

What

" Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster." p.316

Hofstede [1985] also warns how the world is not culturally homogeneous. He agrees that cultures are made up of contrasting positions, 'individualism' versus 'collectivism', which coexist and become accentuated, depending on the situation. He offers an insight into effective understanding when interacting with people in other countries. His work is directed at a number of cross-cultural learning situations and warns that when teacher and student come from different cultures, confusion arises due to different cultural and philosophical mind-sets, differences in profiles of cognitive abilities,

differences in the expectations of teacher/student and student/student interaction, as well as differences in opinion of the relevance of the curriculum.

Hofstede makes the point that *"the burden of adaptation in cross-cultural learning situations should be primarily on the teachers."* p. 301. He qualifies these thoughts with the following comments:

> *"The focus of the teacher's training should be on learning about his/her own culture: getting intellectually and emotionally accustomed to the fact that in other societies, people learn in different ways. This means taking one step back from one's values and cherished beliefs",* which, as he goes on to say *" is far from easy."* p. 316

He suggests two possible strategies for the expatriate teacher:

> 1. *Teach the teacher how to teach;*
> 2. *Teach the learner how to learn.*

He goes on to say that for the expatriate teacher, where the majority of students in the class are of local origin, the first approach, "*teach the teacher how to teach",* would be the correct strategy to take. Hernandez [1989] supports Hofstede's remarks. He suggests teachers to:

> *"develop an understanding of the way various cultural elements affect the teaching and learning process which, requires cultural awareness and knowledge both of one's own culture and that of one's students. It also requires a thorough grasp of the multifaceted connection between culture and the classroom. Key concepts associated with cultural awareness include ethnocentrism, stereotyping, cultural relativism, and acculturation."* p. 40

Hofstede [1986] points out how if these cultural concepts are not addressed, then confusion can arise. He says:

> *"This can be due to different social positions of teachers and students in the two societies, to differences in the relevance of the curriculum for the two societies, to differences in profiles of cognitive abilities between the populations of the two societies, or to differences in expected teacher/student and student/student interaction."* p. 301

Hofstede's points above express his trepidation over the bringing together of multifarious cultural elements within an educational environment and give rise to the question of whether or not The Academy's educational practice is appropriate. His concerns are echoed by Triandis who also warns of

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the dangers of what he calls *"pseudoetic research, where concepts from one culture are imposed on another as if they are universal."* [1972, p.20]. Triandis examines some of the limitations of social psychology and shows how they can be remedied by increased attention to cross-cultural studies. The Hong Kong Cultural and Heritage Commission Policy Recommendation Report released in 2004 also looks at ways of developing a better understanding of different cultures. The report commented:

> *"Hong Kong people's cultural identity should start from local culture, be grounded in Chinese cultural traditions, and possess a global vision."* p.2. The report also went on to say, *"Hong Kong people should increase their understanding of, and identification with, Chinese culture and recognize the major role of non-Chinese communities in developing the diverse culture of Hong Kong."* p.27.

The report, however, goes go on to say:

> *"Whilst Hong Kong's culture is a component of Chinese culture, our long-term goal should be to expand our global cultural vision on the foundation of Chinese culture."* p.27

This should not be too difficult for the 91% of Academy students who have graduated from the Hong Kong secondary school system, who are of local origin, and whose foundation of their education and thus their cultural identity reflects that of a Chinese ethnicity.   The question is whether The Academy's curriculum expands on the student's global cultural vision through the foundation of Chinese culture or whether it blindly replicates a western performing and technical arts training programme that is distinctively American with western aims and objectives?

The importance of considering cultural matters when planning educational objectives is identified by many researchers. Trompenaars [1993] suggests we look at culture through layers rather than variances or clashes. He explains how every culture distinguishes itself from others by the way it chooses to solve certain problems. Problems that arise from our relationships with other people from those that come from the passage of time and those that relate to the environment. His analogy of culture to an onion is befitting:

> *"Culture comes in layers like an onion. To understand it you have to unpeel it layer by layer."* p.6

> *"On the outer layer are the products of culture …… the layers of values and norms are deeper within the 'onion' and are more difficult to identify."* p.7

These are the values and norms that need to be detected if the research is to obtain an accurate picture of the relationship between andragogy and student approaches to learning at The Academy. Cultural opinions and perceptions of a multi-cultural educational society can in themselves easily become misinterpreted unless the layers are carefully unpeeled.

Wei [1995, p.7] explains the layers as a *"shot-silk effect"*. *"Depending on the orientation of your eye, Hong Kong is modern-Western but with underlying Chineseness, or it is Chinese with a surface of English-speaking internationalism."* She writes, *"Hong Kong is full of surprises, paradoxes and contradictions."* By describing a clock tower that sits above the bustling business district in central Hong Kong, she illustrates how whimsically Hong Kong adopts the traditions of China and the West. The figurines on the clock tower depict traditional warriors in classical Chinese dress each carrying a traditional Chinese Zodiac animal. They appear every hour on the hour in time with seventeenth century bells, from a clock tower that is traditionally Western. She goes on to say. *"Not all aspects of this multi-cultural mix in Hong Kong blend so smoothly,………nor is the blend always so palatable."* p.7. This type of blend is also what Copeland [1985] concerns herself with in her research. She emphasizes the importance of compatibility:

> *"Success or failure depends upon the degree to which people who have different ways of doing things and different priorities can work together."* p. 49

It is Copeland's two-way approach, the *'different ways'* and *'different priorities'* that are the focus of this research.

Cushner, who addresses his work in a truly international manner by putting multicultural education into a global perspective, offers these thoughts: *"The moment a child enters the world, he or she begins the task of learning the requirements of a particular family, cultural group and society"* [1990, p.100]. Differences, which Hofstede points out, *"sometimes make it exceedingly difficult for a teacher – or a student – from one nation's system to function well in another's."* [1986, p.304.] After all, *"We are what we are because of culturally based learning"*. Segall, Dasen, Berry and Pootinga [1990, p.9]

2.5   IDENTIFYING TEACHING STRATEGIES.

In looking at teaching strategies, we turn yet again to Hofstede who explains the importance for teachers to come to terms with the differences between their and their students' social and educational backgrounds. He explains how *"such differences sometimes make it exceedingly difficult for a teacher – or a student – from one nation's system to function well in another's"*. [1986, p.304] Brown and

McIntyre [1993] as quoted in Cooper and McIntyre, [1996] also stress the importance for teachers to understand their students. Their work was established on the belief that:

> *"any understanding of teaching will be severely limited unless it incorporates an understanding of how teachers themselves make sense of what they do: how they construe and evaluate their own teaching, how they make judgments, and why, in their own understanding, they choose to act in particular ways in specific circumstances to achieve their successes.* p.1

Both Brown and McIntyre [1993] and Sotto [1994] advise on the importance of understanding students' thinking. Sotto [1994] explains:

> *"It makes no sense to decide how one is going to teach before one has made some study of how people learn. The rider is that, having studied how people learn, we then have to find ways of teaching which take on board what our study of learning has shown us."* p.31

Soto's thoughts concur with Whitaker's theory that the responsibility for creating a positively supportive learning environment is dependent on the teacher's understanding of their students' learning style. Researchers both question the success of a teaching and learning environment that may not be sympathetic to how the students learn. Hofstede [1980] considers the teaching methodologies of teachers working in educational institutes overseas, and points out how,

> *"……..in order to be effective as trainers abroad, teachers have to adopt methods which at home they have learned to consider as outmoded or unpopular: usually much more structured than they were accustomed to."* p.316

Trying to adopt a new and unfamiliar method for any teacher can be difficult, but in the case of teachers at The Academy where the teacher is from overseas and has to face the unspoken acceptance that the 'foreign' teacher is a western 'expert' and knows how to apply rationality to local problem solving, is challenging writes De Bettignies. [1980: 302-303.] Local problem solving is unique to individual societies and as cross-cultural surveys point out individual societies approach education in different ways. Boekaerts [1998] in Watkins & Biggs [2001] pinpoint that in their approach to learning the Chinese student is brought up expecting the teacher to provide clear guidance, rather than letting them flounder when exploring for themselves. She explains:

> *"Traditionally the Chinese teacher is viewed as a respected figure with all wisdom, and the idea that students should control their own learning might contradict such cultural beliefs."* p.183

In contrast, the Western belief, as Whitaker [1995] points out, rests on the philosophy that:

> *"Teachers need to encourage pupils to bring to their learning a synthesis of physical, emotional, intuitive and intellectual well being".* To make this work, he claims, *"it is crucial to employ teaching strategies that develop a sense of pupils being fully involved in their own learning."* p.7

This philosophy is outlined in The Academy's mission statement, [1996] which pledges to:

> *"Provide students with the opportunity to develop his/her creative and practical skills. The goal is to produce an individual who is imaginative, knowledgeable and motivated, one who has clear personal goals, is aware of his personal responsibilities as an artist, and who is prepared to meet his obligations both individually and to the collaborative team"* p.30.

But, as research identifies, these strategies are not conducive to the Hong Kong students' traditional cognitive ways. In Hong Kong formal education generally begins at kindergarten level where children spend up to eight hours a day under strict guidance. Here they are taught strict codes of practice where they may face punishment if they disobey or step out of line. At this early age they are even taught to address real mathematical problems, memorization and drilling. Pressures of achievement and success await them as soon as they progress to primary school.

> *"Children sit quietly, neatly in rows, following rote methods of learning, receiving explicit instruction in numbers, letters, and characters"* [Bond 1991, p.12]

Bond's work draws on 20 years of experience of the Chinese, and his understanding of the Chinese behaviour is both insightful and helpful to this research. He explains, that the Hong Kong primary and secondary education system accepts, even expects, teachers to take the leading role. Another writer, Sotto, explains that the education system favours an approach whereby the teachers often give their students one fact at a time, a methodology that is based on *"the belief that knowledge is like a wall made up of separate bricks."* [1994, p.43]

Sotto's analogy of the brick wall suggests that the problem can stem from the learners being given one brick at a time, to place next to each other, and then on top of each other, based on the theory that the

students only understand the topic when the last brick is placed on the wall. According to Sotto this is a systematic approach to learning that results in a lack of initiative and an inability on the part of the students to make decisions and think independently. This systematic approach has resulted in much criticism being bestowed on Hong Kong students with the disadvantage that the student does not learn how the bricks are held together, resulting in them not being able to fully understand *"the way its facts fit together to make a certain kind of pattern"* p.43. This, Sotto [1994, p.43] explains, is what Gestalt psychologists mean when they refer to the saying: *'the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.'* Ramsden [1988] also criticizes this approach:

> *"The Chinese education system fails to encourage curiosity and leaves little time for the pursuit of creative thinking. The system produces students who are solely concerned with getting the right answer to the exclusion of knowing how to get it and what it means when it has been obtained"* p.20.

Ramsdem's work presents a coherent and inspirational model for developing the quality of teaching and learning in higher education. His principles of being a good teacher stem from his understanding of students' experiences of learning. Sotto concurs with this hypothesis. He explains that if teachers were alert to the fact that they need to create carefully structured and inherently interesting learning situations, situations that enable learners to become actively engaged, the shift in focus will turn away from teaching and on to learning.

Of course different cultures have different concepts of how learning should take place, and indeed much research on the Hong Kong education system has identified an apparent fundamental difference in the philosophical approach to education compared to the West. As Bond [1991] comments:

> *"There are some distinctive features of the way Chinese think and these cultural characteristics appear to arise from the style of social training and the educational requirements that distinguish the Chinese from other groups."* p.20

Knowles' [1984] theory of andragogy, which is built on a comprehensive model premised on five critical hypothesis defines the characteristics of adult learners as being different from the characteristics of child learners. These are:

- *"**Self-concept:** As a person matures his self concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being.*
- ***Experience:** As a person matures he accumulates a growing reservoir of*

> *experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.*
> - **Readiness to learn:** *As a person matures his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles.*
> - **Orientation to learning:** *As a person matures his time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his orientation towards learning shifts from one of subject-centredness to one of problem centredness.*
> - **Motivation to learn:** *As a person matures the motivation to learn is internal."*
> [p.12]

Knowles was a very influential figure in the field of adult education in the United States, especially during the second half of the twentieth century, and his work, which has been widely discussed and used, plays a significant role in reorienting adult educators from 'educating people' to 'helping them learn' [Knowles 1950: 6]. His work is seen as particularly relevant to this research as it identifies with the challenges The Academy faces in its attempt to move the students from the familiar teacher-focused learning environment to one that is more independent and engaged.

Knowles [1980, p.98] highlights the importance of a *"friendly and informal climate where the flexibility of the process, the use of experience, and the enthusiasm and commitment of participants"* is important. He points out, *"adults possess a reservoir of experiences that affect how they perceive the world and that represent an important source of material for curriculum development and learning activities".* He goes on to say that this prior learning and experience coheres into a unique, idiosyncratic mediatory mechanism through which new experiences and knowledge are filtered.

It is interesting to consider Knowles' work alongside that of the great teachers like Confucius and Plato, who, some two thousand years ago, first recognized the idea that understanding something stems from recognition of something already in our minds, rather than an understanding of something that is entirely new. Dewey also encouraged learning through activities rather than focusing on authoritarian techniques. He pointed out how children learn better from real life experiences rather than a theoretical situation. These determinates are also reported by Goldfarb [2000] in Edward G. Rozycki & M. F. Goldfarb. Goldfarb cites Lev Semenovich Vygotsky [1896 – 1934]. Goldfarb refers to Vgotsky's social cultural approach to learning:

> *"Cognitive skills and patterns of thinking are not primarily determined by innate factors, but are the products of the activities practiced in the social institutions of the culture in which the individual grows up. Consequently, the history of the society in which a child is reared and the*

child's personal history are crucial determinants of the way in which that individual will think."

In her analysis of Jerome Bruner's education theory, Flores [2001] cites Bruner:

"Students realize that, as they learn, they are able to access information that they were previously unable to utilize. This reward and excitement perpetuates the student to learn even more. Educators should assist with this." [1983, v39, p.135.]

Both Vygotsky's social cultural approach to learning and Bruner's concept of learning as a 'transactional' process are relevant to this research. Both emphasize the need for learners to be given opportunities to make sense of new knowledge through the application of their existing knowledge, thus establishing ownership of both the knowledge and the process of learning itself.

Cooper and McIntyre [1996] also highlight the importance of using students' existing knowledge in the classroom. They cite Slater [1991] who suggests:

"It is precisely through this harnessing of pupils' existing knowledge and interests that teachers can facilitate pupil motivation for and engagement in learning." p.16

Sotto, whose work also concurs with this theory, highlights the importance of *"seeing our practice in terms of our past experiences, that is, in terms of a theory we already have."* [1994, p.11] He explains this hypothesis as a collection of all our past experiences of being a learner, which results in us viewing our standpoints from that frame of reference. Sotto draws on his extensive experience to offer succinct explanations of theoretical concerns, which inform the practice of teaching and learning.

The work of Watkins & Biggs [1996, 2000, 2001] is also considered here because of their interests in relation to effective learning. Their research, which focuses particularly on Confucian heritage cultures, suggests treading carefully when making use of imported western approaches, which they say should be considered in relation to not just the cultural contexts but also the characteristics of the learners. Dimmock [1998, 2000] also challenges the universal approach of Western theories and practices in education. Dimmock's research was selected because of his teaching and consultancy work in a variety of countries including Hong Kong. His concerns relate to what he calls, *'globalization of education'* in which *"minimal attention is paid to the receptivity of the host culture to the imported policy."* [1998, p.375]

2.6   IDENTIFYING LEARNING STRATEGIES

[Wagner, 1981] describes how the programming of minds starts at a very young age, as students develop within their own cultural principles. He explains how cognitive abilities are rooted in the total blueprint of a society, as is the diversity in memory development. If we are to accept Wagner's points as relevant to this study, then it would seem appropriate to consider if students at The Academy, whose previous learning patterns have been developed for a particular educational environment within Hong Kong, will prosper well and respond positively in an environment that is modeled on a singular learning objective that is characteristic of an American education programme. Brookfield [1986] raises concerns in this regard. He says that the act of facilitating learning is one that is:

> *"Sufficiently complex and challenging as to make us suspicious of any prepackaged collections of practice injunctions."* p.122

Brookfield's work, which was consulted because of his highly respected contribution to the research and practice of effective learning, identifies how, when adult students commence tertiary education they bring experience and practical information to the learning encounter. Existing knowledge, he explains, creates a framework for them to make sense of new information, what he terms as "connectedness" to learning. This 'connectedness' serves better if it includes involvement from the students on what and how it is being taught and leads to students becoming self-directed learners.

Brookfield's work shows how effective learning entails an active search for meaning in which new tasks relate to earlier activities.   Prior learning experiences, he explains, have the potential of enhancing or interfering with new learning. Sotto [1994] points out that effective learning is a matter of trying to understand how people learn, but as Honey & Mumford [1982] remind us, any knowledge of learning styles is only useful if it is applied rather than merely recorded.   Honey & Mumford are co-authors of 'The Manual of Learning Styles', which was developed in the early 1980's as a self-managed learning resource, off-the-shelf training manual with e-learning solutions. They concentrate on helping people learn particularly from practical experiences, and people development. They focus on learning styles; what they are and how they can be identified and show that the key to success in learning more effectively is through an understanding of the different learning styles. Their work is seen as pertinent to this research as only a true understanding of students learning styles could begin to bring about a sound knowledge and appreciation of how to promote a successful learning environment. They point out:

".... some individuals are heavily dominated by one learning style, or are particularly weak in one style, so some learning activities are dominated by explicit or implicit assumptions about learning styles." What is important here is that, *"the activity may be so geared to a particular style of learning as to cause a mismatch with any participant whose own major preferences are different."* p.21

In his research on adult learning, Brookfield [1986] attempts to construct an exclusive theory of adult learning. He reminds us of the variables when culture, ethnicity, personality and political ethos are involved, and points out:

"Learning is far too complex an activity for anyone to say with any real confidence that a particular approach is always likely to produce the most effective results with a particular category of learner, irrespective of the form, focus, or nature of that learning." p.122

Indeed, no educationalist is likely to disagree that the facilitation of adult learning is a complex process in which the characteristics of the students, the classroom culture and the social climate, as well as the students' assumptions about learning, affect the outcome. Brookfield [1986] reminds us that those engaged in helping adults to learn know that facilitating learning is not always a satisfying experience. He argues that "*facilitating learning is a smoothly flowing voyage along a storm-free river of increasing self-actualization, from which are excluded elements of conflict, anxiety, self-doubt, or challenge.* p.vii.

2.6.1   The Learning Paradigm

In tertiary education in the West the principle function of education is to create environments and experiences that allow students to make discoveries and resolve problems independently rather than merely transmit knowledge. This is a paradigm shift that believes an educational institution exists to *'produce learning'* as opposed to *'providing instruction'*. Supporters of this learning paradigm are Barr & Tagg [1995] whose explanation recognizes that the chief agent in the process is the learner and requires students to be *"active discoverers and constructors of their own knowledge"* p. 21. They believe that knowledge consists of frameworks or wholes that are created or constructed by the learner and like Sotto they suggest, *"knowledge is not seen as cumulative and linear like a wall of bricks, but as a nesting and interacting of frameworks"*. Learning, as they go on to explain, is *"revealed when those frameworks are used to understand and act"*. Like the Gestalt psychologists they refer to the importance of seeing the whole of something, *"the forest rather than the trees, the image of the newspaper photo rather than its dots"*. This they say *"gives meaning to its elements, and that whole becomes more than a sum of component parts"*. p.21

2.6.2 Hong Kong's Education System

Hong Kong's primary and secondary education system is unrelated to the system at The Academy. As we have noted, it is a system that is perceived to engender spoon-feeding and encourages students to regurgitate information. It promotes a reluctance to question statements by bestowing an almost unquestionable credence to the wisdom of the teacher and does not allow for a trial and error approach, as much of the curriculum is based on a memorization approach of surface learning and respect for the masters. The system is condemned for leaving little room for the pursuit of either creativity or curiosity, and some say that it encourages stereotypical students who lack spontaneity and are emotionally flat. Bond [1991] a professor of psychology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong who has spent twenty years studying Chinese behaviour, clarifies:

> *"A number of observers have noted the inhibition of the Chinese when presented with new situations for which they have no prescribed mode of solution. In such situations an adventurous curiosity will promote the discovery of a solution by leading people to experiment with the components of the problem. This is precisely where the Chinese fall short"*. p.25

The shortcomings he explains are understandable when students are the product of a system like that described above. For The Academy this approach is not helped by the obvious gap in arts and cultural education at junior and secondary level. This problem was pointed out by the Director of The Academy in an Academic Board meeting:

> *"Creativity and the accompanying skills lie at the core of an arts and cultural education which in turn contributes, no less than an education in science and technology, to the quality and progress of society. However, the existing secondary school curriculum is strongly biased towards pragmatic knowledge and traditional scholastic, verbal and numeric skills, and it is inadequate for the purpose of encouraging creativity among school-age students."*
> AB/26/2004

The question that comes to mind here is firstly, what, in relation to students at The Academy, is the outcome of this social control? Secondly, if the subject generally perceived as prerequisites for training in the arts are missing, what then is needed to help the students rise to the expectations required of The Academy, and, more importantly, are The Academy expectations realistic and or appropriate?

Biggs [1987, 1989 and 1999] makes an interesting conjecture. He draws on the work of Watkins and Biggs [2001, p.3] who comment, *"Students from Confucian-heritage cultures [CH] are taught in*

classroom conditions that in terms of Western standards cannot be conducive to good learning." Yet, as they go on to point out*, "they nevertheless out-perform Western students, at least in science and mathematics, and have deeper, meaning-oriented, approaches to learning".* This has been confirmed in spatial, numerical, and non-verbal intelligence tests, and according to Biggs' research is the product of good study skills and a systematic approach to learning that apportions time to tasks in relation to their grade earning potential. As his research points out, Chinese students tend to score relatively higher than their Western counterparts in those areas where results in verbal aptitude and attainment tests are comparatively weak. This, one would assume, is because much emphasis is placed on conformity, correct behaviour, ethical guidance and group dependence at schools. However the implications of this style of learning which Biggs [1999, p.13] describes as information that is *"transmitted from teacher to student, like dubbing an audio-tape"* can result in students under-engaging. He goes on to suggest that learning should be:

> *"….a way of interacting with the world. As we learn, our conceptions of phenomena change, and we see the world differently. T*he *acquisition of information in itself does not bring about such a change, but the way we structure that information and think with it does."* p.13

These are similar concepts to Knowles theory of andragogy, which he describes as being fixed in the characteristics of adult learners and which are different from the concept of child learners on which the theory of pedagogy is premised. According to Biggs [1999, p.16] in order for students to engage in the most appropriate cognitive activities for handling new learning, they need to feel a *"need-to-know"* so they will be encouraged to focus on underlying meaning rather than engaging in a surface approach to learning.

2.6.3   Memorization

The ability to memorize and recite passages has always been a necessary discipline in the Chinese education system. Bond [1991] points out,

> *"In ancient times an educated person was a man who had memorized the classics. The discipline to memorise produced a civilized man. Even today there is an almost magical belief in the value of memory work."* p.29

He goes on to explain how every different word in Chinese is represented by one [or more] ideographs and in order to read an ordinary book it is necessary to learn 3,500 of these characters. Hence *"the demands on one's memory capacity for receiving and producing the written Chinese script are enormous"* p.27

Redding [1980, p.212] is of the same opinion. He reminds us: *"The nature of the Chinese script develops children's ability at pattern recognition; it also imposes a need for rote learning"*. The question here is whether this requirement might jeopardize a child's inquisitiveness.

Much negative response has been shown to education systems that concentrate on developing memorization. Sotto [1994, p.115] refers to an experiment that was given to students whose learning he described as being like that of a parrot. What they learnt, he explained was *"the rote application of a rule ………hence, when the conditions are changed, the pupils are lost……… they are unable to transfer what knowledge they have."* Sotto's point to this experiment was to show how 'rote application' inhibits students from transferring knowledge to a new situation and implies bad classroom practice. However, as Sotto [1994, p.199] points out later in his work, an important topic to be considered is *"the context in which learning takes place"* including things like *"the economic, political, cultural and social system of a country"* all factors which he says*, "have a very powerful effect on learning and teaching"*.

Watkins & Biggs [2001] claims learning techniques that are associated with surface learning among Westerners are among Confucian heritage students associated with meaning oriented learning. In discussing good classroom practice they make the point:

> *"The key is that there are universal principles of good teaching, which involve getting the students to engage the learning tasks at an appropriate cognitive level. How that is done depends on the approach to teaching that is appropriate to the culture."* p.297

2.6.4   Encouraging Creativity and Curiosity

Researchers at the Centre for Child Development at the Hong Kong Baptist University expressed their concern about students' verbal aptitude. The most important objective in a child's development they pointed out is to maintain their curiosity. This can be encouraged by both in class and out of school activities and assignments and enhanced by what they refer to as *'low-key homework, which the child finds interesting. The present boring laborious homework destroys their natural curiosity and can lead to learning difficulties."* South China Morning Post [29.12 00]. Ramsden [1988] explains the consequences to this:

> *"If teaching does not encourage students' curiosity, we should not be shocked if students display a desperate desire to memorize authoritative statements."* p.26

Bond [1991] points out the needs for a supportive social framework for creative exploration to be encouraged in any individual:

"The ability and the courage to produce a new but appropriate response to a problem is a much prized characteristic in the West. Creativity is valued for its contribution to progress and as proof of the creator's individuality. But it requires a supportive social framework, which provides time and encouragement for the trial-and-error approach that necessarily accompanies creative exploration. Furthermore, teachers must encourage children to look beneath the surface of things to detect non-obvious bases of relationship among the elements in a problem. On both of these counts, there are problems in Chinese culture" p.24

Stevenson and Stigler [1992] argue against this perception. They compare the successful education practices of Japan, Taiwan and China with those of the United States and question the American educational process, pointing out that:

"In deriding Asian teaching methods as rote, we define our own methods as flexible and innovative. In suggesting that rote learning is pervasive in Asian classrooms, we exaggerate the levels of creativity that result from the American educational process." p.22

Hiu and Sternberg's studies [2003] on the societal and school influences on Chinese and American students' creativity, tend to agree more with Bond's standpoint. Their findings highlight how Chinese students' artwork tends to be perceived as being less creative from both Chinese and American viewpoints. They suggest, *"Chinese students lag behind their American counterparts in the domain of creativity, even though they generally excel in conventional academic tasks."* p.110. What then are the underlying reasons for this divergence? The study suggests three possible explanations:

1. *"An individual's need for autonomy.*
2. *The nature of the Chinese pedagogical practices.*
3. *The importance of standardized testing in the Chinese education system"*
   p.110

So how can teachers foster student's imagination and encourage them to exhibit creativity freely? Hiu and Sternberg highlight the importance in understanding the causal factors. They say:

"Only then can we design suitable educational or social programs to encourage a higher level of creative behavior in Chinese students." p.110

The designing of an educational programme needs the full understanding of the policy makers and educators if a school like The Academy is to provide an environment that can facilitate the development of the students' abilities. In this respect, Watkins and Biggs [1996] remind us:

> *"Accepted principles of Western educational psychology do not appear to transfer easily to the Chinese learner."* They go on to say, *"the result is that Chinese learners are commonly misunderstood by Westerners."* p.22

2.6.5 Academic Recognition

Clearly there are different opinions on what educational approach is suitable for a particular group of learners. Sotto [1994] points out how in some cases education is perceived as a means of climbing a ladder for the purpose of obtaining academic recognition. He says, *"Some people argue that the main aim is to help learners to pass exams"* whilst others think *"it is more important to help them to become inquiring, independent, creative and responsible people."* p.122

Whatever one's belief regarding the process of education, good examination results can rightly or wrongly create the illusion that the student has been successful in his/her learning. This success may result from the process of memorizing the work specifically for the examinations, considered by some as a 'surface approach to learning', or it may be the result of intrinsic study to maximize meaning by understanding, considered by others as a 'deep approach to learning'. However this success may be defined, good examination results, nevertheless tend to strengthen students understanding of the appropriate way to learn. Whitaker [1995] suggests:

> *"one of the key features contributing to effective learning in pupils is a positively supportive classroom climate",* but as he points out, *"The prime responsibility for creating this rests with the teacher and much will depend upon the assumptions about pupils and their learning which have contributed to the forming of a particular teaching style."* p.7

As Honey and Mumford [1986] point out,

> *"trainers too often assume that learners are empty buckets waiting to be filled up by the training method the trainer favours."* p.1

They go on to say:

"The fact that the buckets are different sizes, and/or leak and/or are upside down is conveniently overlooked." p.1

2.6.6 Learning Styles

The learning characteristics of Western and Asian students, according to Cheng [1995], could be seen as sitting at opposite ends of the spectrum, and thus raises the question whether the curriculum offered at The Academy is sensitive to the specific training needs of its students by incorporating teaching practices that take on board student's learning styles in conditions under which students learn best. This is particularly important here not least because we are dealing with teachers and students from different cultural and educational backgrounds but because the subject area is completely new to the students and unlike their previous learning, has no precise rules and regulations. Bond [1991] points out:

> *"A number of observers have noted the inhibition of the Chinese when presented with new situations for which they have no prescribed mode of solution. In such situations an adventurous curiosity will promote the discovery of a solution by leading people to experiment with the components of the problem. This is precisely where the Chinese fall short"* p.25

These points give rise to the question why the curriculum at The Academy is modeled on an American conservatoire education system, which by its nature offers little consideration for Hong Kong students' previous learning styles? Students at The Academy are compelled to adopt an educational approach that questions and stretches their thought processes, one that is innovative and focuses on independent and critical thinking. Cheng [1995], citing Liu [1988], points out how cultural behaviour dictates certain patterns of thinking, feeling and acting, and he believes it unreasonable to ask students to adapt to a different learning style:

> *"I would not hesitate to say that Westerners have ingrained in their culture and milieu a very strong analytic ability. As if created by God for a contrast, the Asians, and in particular the Chinese, seem to have a high sense of synthesis."* p.96

Biggs [1989] points out:

> *"In general, if teachers were to become aware of how typical the approaches to learning of their own students were, as compared to the general population, they would be better able to adjust their teaching accordingly."* p.15

He goes on to say:

> *"Our concern in that kind of situation is to establish how learners can be helped to respond to those aspects which are foreign to their preferred learning style."* p.21

Sotto [1994] reminds us that, *"they come to a class expecting to be given information; and it is the primary job of a teacher to give such information."* p.137. How that information is delivered needs to be considered in the light of how it might be received by the recipients, who need to be engaged at the content level, rather than simply being instructed about a content that is divorced from their daily reality. What Sotto is saying here concurs with Knowles' points explained above that state that the key to learning is through students' prior learning strategies and life experiences. *"The brain is an organ which processes, and it processes information in terms of the schemata it already possesses"* Sotto [1994, p.73]. He goes on to explain:

> *"When something happens to us, it triggers off a feeling already present in us [the product of our past experience]. That is why the same event often elicits quite different reactions in different people. It is as if the world furnishes us with the same hooks on which we hang our different past experiences."* p.95

As he says, *"schemata, once established, are difficult to override."* [p.98], a theory which suggests that teaching can only begin where the learners are at. He points out:

> *"If everything we see and hear is processed via the schemata already present in our brain, then teachers must obviously attempt to find out what schemata are already present in the learners' brains. If they don't, learners may be unable to follow what is going on in a lesson."* p.74

This hypothesis is well recognized in research on effective teaching and learning. Cooper & McIntyre [2001], whose work also relates to effective teaching and learning, saw in their study how the process of scaffolding provides a structure for the student to apply existing skills in new ways. Scaffolding, they say:

> *"Is the extension to the child's capabilities that is afforded when the teacher instructs the pupil in procedures that enable him or her to employ existing skills in a new way in order to solve a problem."* p.117

2.6.7 Association and Understanding

Fisher, and Levene, [1989] concur that the key to learning is association and understanding. They say:

> *"The more meaning a student can find in that which he is to learn, the less he need rely on methods of rote learning such as mnemonic devices. The key to the degree of meaning is association."* p.24

Wittrock, [1977] in Watkins & Biggs [1966] reinforces those thoughts. He says,

> *"...... methods of teaching should be designed to stimulate students to construct meaning from their own experience rather than stimulating them to reproduce the knowledge of others."* p.180

Sotto [1994: 68, 69, 73] suggests that it is better to match new knowledge with what is already inside our brains by seeing with our brains rather than our eyes. This way seeing is a matter of testing what we perceive of the world around us against the schemata is already present in our brains. Wittrock [1986: 21] also emphasizes the value of generating relationships between what students are trying to learn and "*their own personal experiences and prior knowledge*". Cooper & McIntyre [1996] concur with Wittrock, [1977] they cite Wang and Palincsar [1989, p.76] who adopt the philosophy that *"Students who believe that they control their learning are likely to use previously learned skills when acquiring new ones..."* p.22. They go on to say that an increase in a student's sense of personal control can lead, in turn, to greater self-responsibility, achievement motivation and learning. p.22

2.6.8 Surface / Deep Learning

Ramsden [1988] compares a 'surface' approach to learning with that of a 'deep approach' to learning:

> *"Surface approaches epitomize low-quality learning, are geared to short-term requirements, and focus on the need faithfully to reproduce fragments of information presented in class or textbooks. Surface approaches are concerned with 'getting the right answer' to the exclusion of knowing how to get it and of what it means when it has been obtained."* p.20

> *"Deep approaches to learning exemplify the type of learning that employers and teachers expect students to demonstrate. Only through using these approaches can students gain mastery of concepts and a firm hold on detailed factual knowledge in a given subject area.*

Such approaches embody the imaginative and adaptive skills and wide sphere of interests that are increasingly demanded in the world of work" p.20

Biggs however, who first began to look at learning processes of Hong Kong students in 1966, identified three approaches to their learning - surface, deep and achieving. He identified a misconception in the belief that Confucius Heritage Culture [CHC] learners are rote learners and claims:

"CHC students may be repetitive learners but there is no evidence that they rote learn any more than their Western counterparts" p.63

He makes the point that development of skills through repetition comes first, followed by meaning and then interpretation, with repetition being used as the tool for creating meaning [Biggs, 1996, p.57]

Watkins & Biggs, [1996, p.3] rationalize any misunderstandings, which they say, *"lay in cultural differences in the perception of the relationship between memorizing and understanding."* They explain how Western education, which had in the past depended on rote learning but today rejects it, fails to draw a distinction between rote learning and that of memorizing, *"without thought or understanding, [Oxford English Dictionary]"* and repetitive learning, i.e. learning to enhance future recall alongside understanding. In work undertaken in 2001 they point out that *"Chinese learners are commonly misunderstood by Westerners"*

In more in-depth research on his approach to learning, Biggs, [1996] talks of how Chinese learners are not necessarily predisposed to be either surface or deep learners but that their approach to learning varies as a function of the learning requirement. He explains how the prerequisite to learn the Chinese writing system calls for more emphasis on memorization in the earlier years. He also explains how the emphasis on examinations has led students to deal with the perceived requirements of the curriculum by developing 'deep-memorization' strategies, which he explains as seeking out cues, making meaning, and adapting their learning to succeed. This he refers to as a deep approach to learning.

Kember and Gow [1989] offer their own impression of Hong Kong students' approach to learning. They say they make use of a combined approach with both deep and surface learning by first understanding the task and then memorizing it. They make use of the teacher's clearly defined, highly focused and selective instruction to learn with understanding. This allows them to cope with second language instruction and also their cultural values, which emphasize respect for authority and the teacher.

2.6.9   Independence and Imagination

Developing a greater perception of personal control, independence and imagination is something that is not generally instilled in the Hong Kong student. Nevius, [1995] in describing the Hong Kong pre-tertiary education system points out:

> *"While it develops and stores memory to an unprecedented extent, it discourages and precludes all freedom of thought and originality"*. p.65

As we have seen, the Hong Kong education system is structured and disciplined. Clearly repetition plays a key role in the students' learning strategy. In contrast, education in Performing Arts lacks rules and structure. It does not have a fundamental set of universal ideas and it is not necessarily a well-organized discipline. It requires independent decisions, which causes difficulty for Hong Kong Chinese students. Bond [1991] points out how,

> *"Few Chinese have any practice in making decisions and submitting them to public scrutiny. The result is that Chinese people generally lack confidence in their ability to make such decisions. p.85"*

Reporting on an art exhibition in the 'Hong Kong Economic Journal' a Hong Kong artist said of his education:

> *"Students are educated to accept commercial culture without criticism, and the problem in our education system is insufficient intellectual thinking in art."* [12 Feb 1998: p. 12]

The Culture and Heritage Commission Policy Recommendation Report produced by the HK Government in 2004 identified this deficiency:

> *"There is an obvious gap in arts education beyond the junior secondary level; there should be coherence and continuity in the arts education curriculum."* p.9

At an Arts Education Symposium, sponsored by the Polytechnic University of Hong Kong, in early 2003, Parsons pointed out that the only way to prepare students to look at things more critically was through an integrated curriculum. Such an approach has raised much interest in Hong Kong as theorists and policy-makers continue to discuss many different approaches, but till now have drawn no consensus on how to put them into practice. In Parson's view, Performing Arts is considered an *"ill-structured discipline"*, i.e. it does not have a structure and it does not have rules that will always work.

Some art is beautiful, some is not, and in any case beauty, as the saying goes, *"is in the eye of the beholder"*.   Sometimes dripping paint on a canvas is good, sometimes not.   As he says, *"Art does not seem like a tidy discipline. It is not clear that it has an essential structure or an essential set of common ideas or that there is any one way to make it or to think about it."* p.12. In a well-structured discipline he points out*, "there are a number of basic ideas that are essential to the discipline and identify it uniquely. It has clear rules and generalizations that make it a unique discipline. In theory one can learn these subjects by studying its ideas and learning the general rules that structure them.*" Parson's theory appears widespread.   The essential structure and common ideas that identify a structured discipline are missing in the Arts subjects. This brings us to the dilemma of how to define the appropriate teaching strategies that might assist the Hong Kong student in Performing Arts education to learn successfully. Ramsden, [1988] is of the thinking that:

> *"To improve learning, we should certainly change the conditions under which people learn, rather than try to change the people themselves."* p.24

Angelo and Cross, [1993] whose work generally concentrates on assessment techniques points out:

> *"Learning can and often does take place without the benefit of teaching – and sometimes even in spite of it – but there is no such thing as effective teaching in the absence of learning. Teaching without learning is just talking."* p. 3

2.7   LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS ON THE TEACHING/LEARNING PROCESS

Hong Kong's transition from a Colony to the HKSAR has brought about changes in language competency requirements.   Bacon-Shone and Bolton [1987] recalled the high proportion of Hong Kong people who were proficient in English language before 1997. At that time, as Friederichs [1988] recalls:

> *"The colonized accepts and learns the language of the colonizer as a means of improving his status in the society, so that employment in the modern sector is linked to knowledge of the colonial language….."* p. 204

Soon after the return of sovereignty to China, the Education Commission [1999] report commented how *"the English language proficiency of students has deteriorated"*. It is believed that this is because of the changes in the school curriculum, which now places a greater emphasis on Chinese.   So at the beginning of 2000 the Government attempted to balance literacy skills of all students. In its document

entitled 'Education Blueprint for the 21st century' it outlined what it believed to be the community's needs:

"In developing the literacy and other language skills of their students, schools need to take into account the community's need for competence in written and spoken Chinese, (Cantonese or Mandarin) in written and spoken English, and in translation between the two languages. All children should be helped to develop a good level of competence in at least one language (Chinese, for most children), and some competence in a second language [usually English]."
p.9

Wright and Kelly-Holmes [1997, p.43] reported on a conference in which the participants analysed the patterns of language usage post-1997. They quote Cheung-Shing Samuel Leung and Yuen-Fan Lornita Wong who explain, *"the increasing use of Putonghua in the Hong Kong economy after China opened its doors has made the formulation and the implementation of policies concerning the language of education more complicated."* It was at this time that the Chief Executive encouraged all schools to drop English as the medium of instruction, and adopt Cantonese. Reporting in the Education Commission document [1999] he suggested: *"Mother-tongue teaching will assist students to learn more effectively."* The report went on to say:

"Since 1998 most of the secondary schools that have adopted mother-tongue teaching have found that students have improved in both their cognitive and learning abilities. According to feedback students receiving mother-tongue instruction have achieved better results in all subjects, including English." p.6

The test pass rates in schools in the same subjects before and after the switch from English did in fact rise, in some cases from 40% to 80% and according to a University of Hong Kong [HKU] survey a remarkable improvement was noted in many children's learning ability since classes were taught in Cantonese, which, as they reported, showed *"how enormous was the former injustice of teaching them in a foreign language".*

However, schools using English as the medium of instruction [EMI] did not agree.

"Whilst EMI schools have been the most favoured by the local community [with many parents spending a fortune on private tutoring to give their children a better chance of winning a place in the 'elite schools'] the Government continues to 'discriminate against them' threatening their existence through the discriminatory allocation of resources, and worse, by allocating

them students not equipped to learn in the language, which could force them to switch to
Chinese medium instruction [CMI]." [Anon 2002] The South China Morning Post, May 4, p.4

Prominent education experts including Cheng Kai-Ming, Hong Kong University pro-vice chancellor and Education Commission member suggested that Cantonese should not be the main language of instruction. *"Cantonese is a dead language,"* he said, during an interview with The South China Morning Post on April 9, 2000. *"It is leading us nowhere. It has no future."* Professor Amy Tsui Bik-mei, Head of Curriculum Studies at HKU and a member of the medium of instruction working group, did not agree. She made the point that forcing students to learn in another language does them an injustice. She strongly supported the use of Cantonese in schools because she had seen the improved transformation this brings about in students.

This debate is ongoing, but in the meantime the English language competency required of students at The Academy is far reaching, as the institution demands a level of communication that requires students to articulate freely and at a proficient level. The Academy students' handbook [1999] suggests:

> *"Intellectual and performance challenges at increasingly intensive and rigorous levels*
> *throughout the programme encourage students to think and to communicate with precision*
> *about their work and their disciplines."* p.26

Some may consider these expectations unrealistic and question if those planning the curriculum truly understand the complexity of learning through a second language and the challenges that students encounter. As Carrasquillo & Rodriguez [1995] emphasize:

> *"Educators need to understand the linguistic and academic challenges encountered by limited*
> *English proficiency [LEP] students."* p.18

It is only then, they go on to say:

> *"that educators can provide all students with an appropriate learning environment and*
> *teaching strategies that are instrumental in the development of learners' linguistic and*
> *academic competencies. This awareness will help educators identify avenues to motivate and*
> *challenge these learners to get the most out of the content areas…… …"* p.18

Cummins [1980, 1994] and Tikunoff [1985] in Carrasquillo and Rodriguez [1996] explain that in situations where LEP student's language skills are not proficient, unrealistic expectations will arise

with undue pressure placed on them to perform. Rivers [1983] in his research on mixed language competencies points out "Different people at different ages acquire a second language in different ways and at different rates" p.70. Collier's research [1987] as quoted in Carrasquillo & Rodriquez [1996, p.26] supports Cummins' theory that whilst oral communication skills in a second language may be acquired within two or three years, *"students may need five to seven years to acquire the level of proficiency needed for understanding the language in its academic uses."*

As Carrasquillo and Rodriguez [1995] explain,

> *"Many students in mainstream classrooms may have attained the social skills in English and may, on the surface, appear to be proficient; however, if their proficiency in the more cognitively demanding skills, crucial for their academic success, is inadequate, they are likely to encounter difficulties in content area classes"*. p.61

To this point, the United States Federal Government guidelines [1993a] suggest that LEP students undertake three years in a language assistance programme before they are ready to be mainstreamed to a grade-level classroom. DeGeorge, [1988] and Tikunoff, [1985] in their research suggest that if students are not ready to communicate at this level, it can result in LEP students being inadvertently placed in instructional situations where the linguistic demands require an English proficiency level these students have not yet achieved.

Ng, Tsui & Marton, as quoted in Biggs & Watkins [2001, p.159] discuss these difficulties and report, *"Chinese students in Hong Kong are handicapped as far as the mastery of the content of the lesson is concerned when they are taught in English".* To avoid this, Carrasquillo & Rodriguez's work suggests integrating second language teaching and learning theories and instructional strategies to help mainstream educators understand that language minority students, especially those who are not totally proficient in English, need special attention, appropriate assessment and an appropriate language environment. Their work seemed to have a special empathy with this research. They explain that culture and language are not simply an integral part of a training programme, but that developing sensitivity toward the values and traditions of the people whose language is being studied will offer a set of skills that will enable a person to understand and function appropriately. Mastery of a second language as Brown [1980] explains:

> *"is dependent upon acquisition of a second culture and in order to master a second language, the learner must succeed in synchronizing linguistic and cultural development."* p.138-139

Samovar, Porter and Jain [1981, p.141] suggest that language and culture work in tandem and should not be separated. *"Both are learned and both serve to transmit values, beliefs, perceptions and norms."*

2.8 ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION AND MOTIVATION

Participation and motivation are behaviours that are believed to go hand in hand and are generally welcomed by teachers. Neither of them can be enforced; the issue is how they can be encouraged. In regard to participation, Sotto [1994 p.150] points out, *"It can only be invited, and that invitation will be accepted to the extent that the recipients feel that the invitation is sincere and made for a good reason"* He also states:

> *"Classrooms contain teachers, and most people feel uncomfortable when they are asked a question by someone who is in a position of some authority, as teachers are. Perhaps more importantly, classrooms also contain other learners, and many are much more worried about their reactions than about the reaction of a teacher."* p.15

Fisher & Levene [1989] point out that environment has a lot to do with encouraging learning:

> *"Psychologically, the classroom should be a place that encourages learning, especially by permitting questioning both by students and by teachers and promoting dialogue as they find the answers to questions together."* p.32

Sotto [1994] writes:

> *"Learners feel encouraged to participate when they sense that their teacher will not evaluate them each time they speak."* He goes on to say, *"Learners will feel encouraged to participate when they sense that their teacher does not need to be talking all the time."* p.151

Chinese learners are also particularly sensitive about contributing in class if they do not have a good understanding of the subject. Watkins [2000] explains, *"Chinese students ask questions after they have learnt independently of the teacher. They consider that questions should be based on knowledge."* p.170

In regard to motivation, Sotto [1994, p.14-28] says the problem is to find a way of teaching which does not inhibit a student's drive. He says that you often hear teachers searching for ways to motivate students. This philosophy he believes *"is a mistake because it places an emphasis on teaching rather*

than on learning." He explains two very important issues that need to be considered. Firstly he makes the following point: *"The idea that learners have to be motivated must be a misconception. What clearly does require careful study is the conditions under which people best learn."* He suggests that:

> *"Teachers must be alert to factors which may inhibit their learners' motivation to learn"* and *"teachers must work with whatever motivation is already present in their learners."* p.28

This is in line with Knowles philosophy that students' experiences effect how their world is perceived and how in turn this represents an important source of material for curriculum development and learning activities.

Sotto goes on to offer further advice. *"What a teacher can do is to try to create learning situations which are intrinsically rewarding and a climate of learning which is friendly and supportive."* [1994, p.41] This philosophy is highlighted by Biggs [1999, p.13] who claims, *"Motivation is a product of good teaching, not its prerequisite."*

2.9   REVIEWING THE CURRICULUM

Eisner, E.W. [1994] writes:

> *"Initially the word came from the Latin currerre, which means the course to be run. This notion implies a track, a set of obstacles or tasks that an individual is to overcome, something that has a beginning and an end, something that one intends to complete."* p 25.

The metaphor of a racetrack is not altogether an inappropriate description of Hong Kong's primary and secondary education. There is the essential structure of a beginning, middle and an end with a set of tasks to complete in between. The student has a clear picture of the journey with a substantial objective and purpose. However, in performing arts, where the beginning and end is often blurred, the tasks in question, as described by Parsons as *ill-structured*, create challenges that are difficult for Hong Kong students to grasp.

As Blenkin et al [1992] point out:

> *"There have been many theorists of education, from Plato onwards, who have held a concept of education which has entailed a view of the curriculum as a fixed and static entity, as the only device for bringing about the desired education processes."* p.1

2.10   THE WAY FORWARD

Curriculum change has been a major feature of the educational scene for several decades in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, as educational institutions have responded to changes brought about by the nature and values of society. The people of Hong Kong in particular are undergoing intrinsic social and cultural changes that need to be addressed at school level and The Academy should evolve with this changing society. Rolf and Dalin in co-operation with Kleekamp [1993: 23] refer to this as *"The paradigm shift"*. They advise that, *"the school is part of nation building"* and *"school improvements, to be effective, must meet the real needs of students."*

There have been many arguments put forward for curriculum reforms in Hong Kong. One such reform, initiated by the Hong Kong Government in 1993, was the Target Oriented Curriculum [TOC]. Reporting on the outcome of this reform, an Overseas Visiting Panel [1994**]** commented:

> *"TOC was seen as an attempt to tackle the problem of teacher-centred and rote-oriented classrooms occupied by passive students, and was seen as a way to improve the learning environment."* p.6

This was unsuccessful. Perhaps the lack of success of the TOC might indicate how the importation of Western approaches are much more complex than at first perceived and might demonstrate the difficulty students have in adapting to imported methods. Bennet, Crawford and Riches [1992] explain this further:

> *"Many changes require a sophisticated array of activities, structures, diagnoses, teaching strategies, and philosophical understanding if effective implementation is to be achieved."* p.113

One such philosophical understanding is the need for teachers to enter into discussions with their students about the meanings inherent in the changes they are attempting to bring about, wrote Blenkin, Edwards and Kelly [1999 p.48]. Rudduck, [1986a] points out, all too often it is assumed that the teacher's authority is sufficient justification.

So what are the real needs of the students at The Academy in Hong Kong? A higher percentage of graduates are now remaining in the HKSAR or relocating to the PRC to commence their careers rather than pursuing work overseas, as was the case before 1997. It is therefore becoming increasingly clear that the local workplace must play a key role in determining the way forward. Consideration must

therefore be given to the relevancy and subsequent success and/or failure of The Academy's imported educational system and its teaching and learning approach. Of course, as Blenkin et al advise,

> *"Clearly it is unsatisfactory to set about changing the curriculum on the basis of mere assumptions".* p.v.

The concept of change, they say,

> *"needs to be carefully explored as a basis for understanding the processes of curriculum change and for ensuring a proper and sound foundation for our developmental policies."* p.v

They point out that out any change, whatever the scale, will lead to *"changes in our value systems as well as in the material circumstances of our lives."* p.16

Hitherto, these changes, as Cuttance [1995] points out, require organizations to go about their planning and decision making with not only *'a clear direction and purpose'*, but also a *'client focus'* as well as an *'emphasis on the ways in which student learning outcomes can be improved'*.

> *"Education reform needs to address the most basic question of purpose and meaning. What kind of society do we want? What conditions must we provide for both teachers and students for such an education to be meaningful and workable?"* p.729

Of course the bottom line, as he points out, is *"student learning, and consideration must be given to how this can occur in the most productive manner."* p.126

Precise needs and advantages of changing the theoretical assumptions and practices of andragogy within The Academy at this stage are unclear. However, whatever change processes are deemed necessary are unlikely to be exclusive innovations and would almost certainly have a rippling effect throughout the curriculum. Fullan [1993 and 1999] identifies change as being less straight forward than it may seem, but nevertheless recognizes it as a conceivably beneficial and fundamental force for success. He looks on change in a positive way as a compelling and intriguing journey of conflict and diversity as well as resistance.

Stoll and Fink [1995] talk about the initiation of change and the process that leads to the decision to make change. They liken school improvement to a journey. *"The planning process becomes the vehicle to reach the destination and the plan itself the map".* p.70 A journey not dissimilar to the

'race track' as described by Eisner - a track that has a *"course to be run"* with a beginning yet not necessarily a clear and precise ending.

Stoll and Fink [1995] deal with change positively by helping people to characterize the aspirations behind change, by looking at how institutions can be transformed into cultures of collaboration, trust, risk-taking and shared learning. Pring [1995] talks about the rapidly changing social and economic forces, and Bennett et al [1992] offer key information to this investigation as they deal with personal change as much as organizational change. Their theory is that change is not just about the creation of new policies and procedures, but the strategies by which individual students respond to the impact of institutional change. Blenkin, Edwards and Kelly [1992] also consider the relationship between curriculum change and changes in society, warning us, *"Educational change is technically simple and socially complex"* [1992 p.109].

Their comments are germane to the concerns of this research:

> *"If change is to be fully effective……… it will be necessary for teachers to recognize its value, accept the need for it and, perhaps above all, understand the thinking that has prompted it and lies behind it."* p.153

They go on to say:

> *"Change is a highly personal experience. Participants in the change process react differently and failure to recognize those differences will inhibit the progress of initiation and assimilation of change."* p.93

Poster [1999] also believes that planning for change rests on a number of assumptions. As he points out:

> *"Since it is rarely possible to advance on all fronts at the same time, the school development plan must be specific about priorities, and staff must not only be aware of what those priorities are but must also be collectively supportive of the developmental policy."* p.172

Poster [1999] advises:

> *"There are two vital conditions for effective change: that we carry everyone with us and that we are working to a long-term plan in which the parts make up the whole."* p.176

Bennet et al [1992] write that:

> *"Precise needs are often not clear at the beginning, especially with complex changes. People often become clearer about their needs only when they start doing things, that is, during implementation itself."* p.112

2.11 SUMMARY

There are many layers to this study, and the literature required to support it demanded an extensive range of categories. The writers were chosen for their individual and collective values in the field enabling the researcher to learn from previous investigations of similar topics. The extensive body of research written on Chinese students offered an increased understanding of cultural values and norms. Specifically chosen were the works of Bond, Watkins and Biggs, Allison and Wei-ming, Tu, which offered rich data and comparisons and exposed the researcher to areas of thought that might not otherwise have been considered. Whilst acknowledging the apparent academic success of Asian students is generally marked in mathematics, these writers also helped to explain the general trend in other subject areas. Bond, 1986, 1996; Ho, 1986; Watkins & Biggs, 1996 identify several prominent learning characteristics within Confucian cultures and show how social-achievement, attentiveness, attributing success to effort, a competitive spirit and a strong belief in the saying "practice makes perfect" all contribute to this phenomenon. Biggs (1994) distinguishes rote learning from repetitive learning and points out how on-going practice can deepen understanding (see also Watkins, 1996). These writers interpreted the philosophical works of Confucius as "Learn and put your knowledge into practice frequently" (Analects, 1:1) They pointed out how Confucius did not necessarily advocate rote learning and over-drilling and did not exactly suppress creativity but rather implied that topics and problems be unfolded, not man-made. Confucius' words, "Learn the new when revising the old" (Analects, 2:11). They also implied that only then would there be a real understanding and only then would students be comfortable to ask questions to progress forward.

Whilst realizing that over-simplification and generalization of the characteristics of Chinese Heritage Cultures (CHC) could weaken or undermined any assessment of the teaching and learning process at The Academy, the research nevertheless acknowledges a likely correlation between the teaching and learning characteristics as described by these writers with the way students at The Academy approach their learning. It was therefore decided to pay particular attention during the investigation to try to ascertain if The Academy students were actually being given the opportunity to repeat practice and generally encouraged to become intimately familiar with content as a way for them to get to the point where they could repeat naturally and feel comfortable to question.

Whilst these writers do not specifically address performing arts subjects in their research, their use of

conventional testing instruments, open-ended questions and classroom observations were also considered a suitable approach in this research for identifying if examination orientation, success orientation, repetitive learning, and the use of memorization together with understanding, were being used to bring about confidence and understanding.

An important aspect for reflection was the role of education within a society, and for this the research turned to the work of Dimmock. The Academy, as mentioned previously, stands alone as the only tertiary level institution in Hong Kong for professional training and education in both Chinese and Western-performing and technical arts. Consequently there is no opportunity to examine the teaching and learning process against that of a similar institution. Dimmock's work, however, offered a perspective of the Hong Kong school culture for consideration and an appreciation of how to measure his values with the multifarious characteristics of The Academy's. Dimmock's work addresses cultural differences within various societies and the consequential challenges that become apparent in classroom teaching and learning. He shows how within the Hong Kong culture these differences can make over-dependence on Anglo-American approaches misleading, ineffective and restrictive. Dimmock's thoughts encouraged the researcher to look more deeply into the presentation and content of the curriculum at The Academy to determine if similar cross-cultural learning challenges were evident, and if, in The Academy's situation, the teaching and learning was appropriate for its students and their objectives.

The uniqueness of this study is, however, particularly attributable to the principals relating to teaching and learning within performing arts education in Hong Kong. To gather views on this, the researcher turned to the works of Sarason and Jackson and other writers' on the lessons of John Dewey. These writers identify how the central concept of Dewey's theory of education relates to the emphasis placed on problem solving and critical thinking, rather than simply on memorization skills. Whilst this thinking is in line with that of The Academy's philosophy, they are in fact areas that cause the greatest challenges for Chinese learners who are grossly underdeveloped in these areas. Like Confucius' idea, *"Learn the new when revising the old",* Dewey's main theory also advocates the importance of incorporating the student's past experiences into new learning. He explains that learning can be a beneficial experience when new learning experiences reflect on the past, work through the present and prepare for the future (Experience and Education, 1938). He further clarifies that the success of any student-curriculum relationship is rooted not just in past experiences but also in the resulting knowledge of those experiences and daily habits. Dewey's work was not seen as a source of teaching strategies to follow, but rather as a set of lenses through which to view the theory of classroom teaching. His theoretical base and educational ideas about student-curriculum relationships supplied values rather than specific recommendations. This encouraged the researcher to investigate classroom challenges and identify the kind of progressive learning opportunities available to the student at The

Academy, thus allowing the researcher to draw conclusions and recommendations through a better informed and broader perspective.

Curriculum planning and change plays a big consideration in this research. To understand more about how to put together a curriculum to help people fit within the social order, the researcher consulted the works of Blenkin, Edwards and Kelly as well as that of Albert & Triandis. All of these writers draw together ideas that assist those promoting curriculum change whilst at the same time considering the effects of those on the receiving end. Their work was particularly valuable because of how they identify with cross-cultural concerns. They show how miscommunication, when people from different cultures meet and communicate without comprehending the differences in their communication systems, can result in serious consequences. Triandis (1972) explains a particular situation may differ from culture to culture due to differences in norms, values, role perceptions and experiences. These differences, he explains, results in different interpretive frameworks and may lead members of two different cultures to view the same situation in different ways and behave differently. The result may be confusion, misunderstanding or conflict (Albert, 1983). The work of these writers encouraged the researcher to dive into more meaningful research of intercultural communication and consider more thoroughly the way the students at The Academy interpret behaviours and situations. It helped the researcher to see the way in which information is processed and to empathize with misunderstanding and misinterpretations.

Much research has identified the argument that Hong Kong students' approaches to learning is different to students in the West, and further research was concerned to find ways to better understand the students' approaches to learning. Anthony Leung Kam-chung's and the Hong Kong Education Commission's studies were useful here to understand Hong Kong's educational objectives. More specifically the work turned to Honey and Mumford, Ramsdem and Stevenson and Stigler and Hofstede, which energized a vigorous debate on the considerations of teaching and learning as well as educational and cultural characteristics that influence the goal of education.

Honey and Mumford's work played a specific role in understanding students' approaches to learning. Their work, which focuses particularly on learning and behaviour, believes that these are the two single most important contributors to success. As they point out, we all learn in different ways and when students are taught in ways that are unnatural to them, they are not able to perform at an optimum level. They may be assumed to be weak learners but in reality they simply are not being given the chance to learn in a way that is appropriate to them. Honey and Mumford point out that to improve learning effectiveness one needs to know how the brain works. Their approach to exploring the success of learning is through four different learning styles, all of which they say are indicators of how

individuals choose to learn. Through questionnaires they are able to show how we all tend to identify with a particular way of learning. They point out how knowing your own learning style can accelerate learning as you undertake activities that best fit within your preferred style. Whilst the use of questionnaires helped the researcher to understand the students preferred learning styles, it was nevertheless felt that the collection of data would only go half way to understanding the reality of the situation. To get the full picture and to be able to ascertain if the students could relate to the way that the teachers were approaching their teaching, the data would need to be compared with the teachers perceived understanding of the students learning styles. By using the same questionnaire, but seen through the eyes of the teachers, the research was able to draw comparative data from both teachers and students, thereby resulting in an informative and constructive understanding of the challenges that both the teachers and students face.

Hofstede tests the significance of different approaches to learning in different cultures through the power distance index. This helped the researcher to be better informed and better able to recognize the differences in the way the teachers deliver information and the way the students receive and assimilate it. In low 'Power Dimension' cultures researchers hypothesize that information exchange in organizations is likely to be facilitated better than in cultures with high collectivism scores where it is likely to be restricted. This prompted the researcher to try to better understand the way members of different cultures approach teaching and learning and encouraged a review on how the rebuilding of the curriculum could take place to reduce the cultural gap.

The works of Stevenson and Stigler gave the researcher an insight into the Asian educational system. These writers have undertaken comparative research on the Asian and American school systems. Their explanations into the understanding of how and why students think in the way that they do begged the question whether the teachers at the Academy had any understanding or had given any thought into this complex phenomena. Their research recommends that teachers take a hard look at Asian schools, especially the elementary school system where in these critical years students are not divided into high or low ability groups, but rather teachers may present each lesson in a variety of ways to help students with different skills and different levels. They explain how Asian students receive much more direct instruction. Teachers in fact were found to be *"leaders of the child's activities 90 percent of the time, as apposed to 74 percent of the time in Japan, and only 46 percent of the time in the United States"* (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992, p. 24). They explain how students during the early months of schooling are *"explicitly taught the component skills that are necessary for smooth operation of the classroom,"* (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992, p. 61) and *"how to move from one activity to another, how to arrange the content of their desks, how to pay attention and follow directions, and how to speak loudly and clearly so they will be understood"* (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992, p. 61). Their work prompted the researcher to give particular attention to how teachers at The Academy could be given the opportunity to better

understand this approach to learning.

Ramsdem's work was also consulted because of the way he views the teacher/learning relationship. He argues that the best approach to improving teaching is by studying students' learning. His studies focus on students' learning rather than on the teachers' performance. Ramsden encouraged the researcher to give particular attention to both The Academy and teachers' sensitivity towards students' approach to learning.

These teaching and learning strategies were considered alongside the works of Cooper and McIntyre, Brown and McIntyre and Fisher and Levine who dissect existing hypothesis to help to point the way forward for a more effective teaching and learning outcome. The work of Cooper and McIntyre helps the reader to explore from both the perspective of the teacher as well as the perspective of the learner. In their studies of teachers' personal practical theories, Cooper and McIntyre, observed classes and then used a method of interviewing that adopted an 'informal' style to promote participants to recall important aspects of the lesson. This had the effect of encouraging teachers to reflect on their teaching and reveal their personal practical theories which resulted in a better understanding of the teaching process. They argue that it is important to understand the complexities of classroom teaching and learning before it is possible to generate hypotheses about effective practice, (Cooper and McIntyre, 1996). On the basis of their experience the researcher followed a similar strategy of observation followed by informal interviews, thereby giving the researcher a better insight into the teachers' perspective of their teaching and resulted in a clearer understanding of how the teachers at The Academy view their students and embark upon their teaching tasks.

It would not have been fitting to complete this research without including thoughts on the implications that English language instruction might have on the teaching/learning process of Hong Kong students. For this Wright and Kelly-Holmes' work contributed to a better understanding of the language system and its implications. Their "One Country, Two Systems, Three Languages" was a set of papers drawn from a conference that took place at the University of Hong Kong in 1996. The participants analyzed the patterns of language use that prevailed in mid-1996 and assessed the linguistic changes that might accompany the political shift when Hong Kong was returned to China. This gave the researcher an understanding of the complexity of language usage and the demands this would have on the average Hong Kong student and encouraged the researcher to consider language issues in greater depth than it may otherwise have been thought necessary.

Of course, one of the main aspects of the research was the theory of andragogy and the difficulties students might have in aspiring to the principles relating to this approach to learning. Androgogy, described as a particular teaching method and philosophy, is built on the hypothesis that the

characteristics of adult learners are different from the hypothesis on which other conventional teaching methodologies are based. The theory of andragogy as described by Knowles, Brookfield and other lesser-known writers on the subject uses a specific framework for thinking about how adults learn. This framework was used in the research as a basis to identify how adult learners at the Academy perform. Knowles talks about the different notions of "self concept, experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning and motivation to learn". With these notions in mind it was possible to make an assessment of the teaching and learning process at The Academy.

It seemed fitting to also consider Confucian tradition. As we have seen, some western researchers criticize Confucian heritage students approaches to learning, and they even go as far as to say that Confucian approaches are primitive and ineffective especially when it comes to getting students to think creatively. Yet other researchers, like Biggs, challenge this view and believe that because Chinese students place a higher premium on the mastery of a subject more than their western counterparts, they have more potential for success. Biggs, who is internationally recognized for his research on how students go about learning, offered the researcher a different perspective on teaching and learning across cultures as he challenged some of the generalizations and stereotypical descriptions relating to surface and rote learning practices. Both he and Kember and Gow have done considerable research in Hong Kong, Australia, and other Southeast Asian countries and suggest that the stereotype is based on a misunderstanding. They found no support for the concept of students from Asian backgrounds assuming essentially surface or rote approaches to learning. They suggest that in investigating students' learning behaviour, there is a need to proceed with caution when making generalizations about the learning approaches of students from other cultures. In fact, in Asian cultures it seems that these strategies actually tend to be intertwined in order to support understanding. This thinking helped the researcher to review the notion of repetition and memorizing as learning strategies and re-consider how they might lead to understanding. Dimmock suggests that we should not be blindly importing educational interventions from one culture to another, but rather we should try to better understand what is distinctive about Chinese approaches to learning and work out how to make use of these distinctive features more positively.

If the research is to be of any value and assist The Academy in understanding how to move forward, it needs to be clear on how to proceed with educational change that is appropriate. Fullan's expertise was consulted here. Fullan supports the idea that the key to changing the culture of classrooms depends on relationships and values. He explains that when we think about change we need to think about what and how students are learning. We need to focus on changing the culture of the school. Teachers need to collectively focus on student performance and develop action plans to improve it, but he Fullan reminds us that students tend to be a vastly under-utilized resource when it comes to researching change in the curriculum. They have ideas about how schools should be, yet they are rarely

recognized as participants in the change processes. He reminds us that not only must they be part of the solution, but suggests that in many cases they may actually have better ideas for how to move forward. Fullan's thinking encouraged the researcher to consider the potential value of students' input and place a bigger emphasis on their involvement in data gathering.

 Of course, many questions still remain, but it is hoped that the results of this research will contribute not just to already existing literature pertaining to the way Hong Kong Chinese students learn, but that the results will be a useful collection of data that not only identify the challenges of the teaching and learning processes at The Academy, but point the way forward to an improved teaching and learning approach to performing arts education in Hong Kong

3.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   OVERVIEW

This research has been undertaken by a Westerner – a resident of Hong Kong and a teacher of Chinese students in performing arts for 20 years. It is hoped that the researcher is considered suitably positioned to understand the complexity of the cultural and educational issues attached to this research, an understanding that can only come from time spent in the presence of Chinese students and experience gained through teaching alongside Chinese teachers in Hong Kong's unique cultural environment. Research on Chinese education conducted by Western researchers is very much 'in vogue' at present. This research, in relation to Chinese learners, has been the subject of some criticism. Such criticism stems from a concern that the conclusions reached orientate with, and are founded on, Western educational beliefs/values. At the time of conducting research and collecting data, the researcher's main concerns centered on this very point. How can data be best collected and how can the researcher be sure of accurate and uncompromised results?

> *"outsiders to a culture may better perceive what is figure and what is ground than insiders".*
> Chang, in Watkins & Biggs [2001, p.5]

Whether you agree with Chang or not, being a Westerner by birth and a resident of Hong Kong since 1984, the researcher has been in a unique position to gather and analyze data. First of all, at the time of data collection, the researcher already had spent a considerable time – 8 years in the Middle East and 24 years in the Far East. The researcher has been suitably positioned to respect the complexity of cultural and educational issues that are attached to this research. Methods of data collection attempted to minimize, and where possible, neutralize bias analysis. Research was conducted through questionnaires, interviews and observation; whenever necessary, assistance was obtained for Chinese translation. Limitation to the study might be considered because of the inability of the Researcher to read Chinese. This did not affect how the data could be analyzed since in all cases it was completed in English. There is, of course, a body of secondary research written only in Chinese, which was not considered for this research; however, it was felt that there is sufficient data in translation to support this study. That this work will be taken further then works limited to Chinese writing may be considered helpful.

The goal of the research was not to explore the strengths and weaknesses of the American or the local Hong Kong education systems, or to call into question the premise and prescriptions of either system, but rather to investigate the andragogy within The Academy and discuss any tensions that exist

between the values that the local education system has inculcated in the students and the 'imposed' American values set by The Academy. To a number of researchers the key characteristics of andragogy, as compared to that of pedagogy, is self-directed, independent learning, a shift from subject-centredness to one of problem centredness, and where learners are able to make use of existing knowledge as a foundation for new information and to develop original thought. It is that shift from pedagogy to andragogy as well as the developmental needs of the Hong Kong students in performing arts education that is the key to the investigation. The research will focus on a sample of students from the Applied Arts department and will look at the curriculum presently on offer to assess if the educational approach is workable.

In this respect the researcher examined:

- Educational and cultural characteristics within The Academy and against the backdrop of the social, political and educational changes presently taking place in Hong Kong.
- The values underpinning the Hong Kong student's approach to learning and the 'imposed' American values of the Academy and the Western World.

The purpose of the study is to:

- Determine the principles relating to teaching and learning in performing arts education within The Academy.
- Evaluate perceptions of the teaching and learning environment to identify if students are being prepared within the context of Hong Kong.
- Suggest ways to improve the quality of education.

3.2   AN OVERVIEW OF THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY.

This type of research does not simply warrant hard data, facts and figures developed through isolated research methods leaving no latitude for ambiguities. Rather, the study should be firmly rooted in the interpretive paradigm to better understand the ways in which people negotiate and interpret meaning through social interaction and where it would be better suited to consider the actual context and discover how the human being analyses his social world. Whilst it might be thought that the interpretative paradigm could result in contrasting ways of construing reality, these different realities get constructed through the understanding of specific roles, associations and cultural experiences, all of which place powerful limitations on the way people operate. These constraints, however, may not necessarily be subjective, and because the interpretative paradigm allows the researcher to engage with

the social group in a systematic manner, it permits understanding of how people directly involved in it experience the world. As Hammersley and Atkinson in Johnson [1983, p.135] advise, *"any account of human behaviour requires that we understand the social meanings that inform it."* Of course, such a methodology, concentrating on exploration and open-mindedness, can run the risk of preventing an end goal. In this respect it was felt that the research required the support of positive methods to offer structure and allow for a more complete justification of the findings and an unrestricted and unbiased conclusion. The major focus of the investigation is:

- The ways in which Hong Kong students approach learning.
- Approaches to the facilitation of learning at The Academy.
- Teachers' and students' views on the education process.

To determine the effectiveness of the present teaching and learning methodology, the study examined students' learning styles to identify the suitability of the existing curriculum and its accessibility to the learner, given his or her past learning experiences. Both the teachers and students played a key role in the investigation. In the event that the research identified shortcomings in the existing structure, the major players were consulted and data was readily available for change to be addressed.

Scott [1999] reminds us that a key decision in programme design is to identify whom to consult and to consider why their views are important. He recommends,

> *"A particularly important group to involve in the design process is the learners for whom it is intended."* p.38

He maintains that excellent advice can be had from samples of students that have already completed a similar programme. As he says, "*Don't underestimate the importance of getting advice from those who have already 'trod the path'."* p.40

3.3   RESEARCH AIMS & OBJECTIVES

The research methodology was based on the study of 'natural' social processes, the study of groups and individuals in their natural environment – an investigation of behaviour, which needed decoding and acknowledging within its cultural context. To identify a coherent direction to the study, therefore, the following research aims and objectives were considered:

Table : 3.1

Title : Aims and Objectives of the Research

Research Aims and Objectives
Gain an understanding of teachers' and students' educational and cultural philosophies relating to teaching and learning at The Academy.
Identify if the present curriculum is appropriate to serve the perceived needs of the students and teachers within the context of Hong Kong.
Evaluate perceptions of the teaching and learning environment.
Evaluate interaction between staff and students.

In consideration, therefore, of the hermeneutics of cross-cultural interpretation and the unique features of Hong Kong Chinese students together with a plethora of Western cultural and educational philosophies exercised at The Academy, the research also:

- Examined the mix of Western and Hong Kong Chinese educational philosophies and cultural traditions, to identify any barriers currently preventing effective teamwork.
- Measured the coherence of the educational experience from the point of view of the students.
- Considered how much cultural, educational and linguistic diversity a performing arts school can contain, whilst still counting on enough unity to maintain its overall viability.

3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

The objective of the research was to investigate a situation within its actual context with a view to identifying its appropriateness for the Hong Kong student. It required an analysis of not just the teaching and learning methodology, but also interpersonal communication styles, attitudes and behaviours and interactive processes. To gain an insight into such a perspective the researcher adopted a sensitive, personal and sympathetic approach as a way to define the objectives of the social positions and shared beliefs of those being researched. To investigate in isolation and out of context would have lost sight of individual as well as group aspirations. The teaching and learning philosopies of all members in the group, individual teachers and students, were investigated. This demanded analytical thought and required techniques that fostered a sensitive, personal and sympathetic approach in order to discover shared beliefs and determine the legitimate interpretation of the situation. It required an analysis of not just the teaching and learning methodology, but also interpersonal communication styles, attitudes and behaviours and interactive processes.

The many variables to be considered when combining intercultural and educational philosophies do not call for a 'cold' method of investigation. A superficial analysis would have created difficulties in capturing the spontaneous activity that reflects the structure and beliefs of the teachers and students at The Academy. If the data were to identify whether the present curriculum is appropriate for the perceived needs of the students and teachers, then it was important to understand what those perceived needs are. The key to this was to acquire an insight into the perspective by extracting material that represents a personal and circumstantial viewpoint of the situation - data that lies buried deep within the minds and attitudes, feelings and reactions of these participants. Of course perception can vary from person to person and different groups of people perceiving different things about a given situation. Both teachers and students may have many different ideas of what they believe an educational programme should be, and for this it is important to hear what they have to say and recognize them as participants in the research process. So, by focusing on 'action' and by entering into a dialogue with staff and students, and developing a rapport that encourages them to make judgment, it should be possible to analyse interpersonal communication styles, attitudes and behaviours and thus gain an understanding of their philosophy towards teaching and learning and in turn the success or failure of the curriculum.

Like the research of a social scientist, the aim was to foster a sensitive, personal and sympathetic research approach that resulted in words rather than an analytical survey reliant only on numerals, whilst at the same time produce a logical and truthful conclusion to the research. Easterby-Smith et al, [1994] advise:

> *"The task of the social scientist should not be to gather facts and measure how often certain patterns occur, but to appreciate the different construction and meanings that people place upon their experience."* p.778

In this respect the study focused on what the teachers and students 'do' rather than only on what they 'say they do'. In his work on real world research Robson [2002, p.310] suggests observation techniques as the appropriate technique for getting at 'real life' in the real world, explaining that seeing what people do is somehow more valid than listening to what they say. He reminds us that *"saying is one thing, doing is another"* p.310.

The research therefore lent itself to be located within the framework of the interpretative paradigm, Cohen and Manion [1994, p.36] refer to the interpretive paradigm as being, *"characterized by a concern for the individual",* an investigation that needs to be understood from within and which requires a systematic investigation of a naturalistic approach. Social research of this nature seeks to

understand how human life is experienced. It seeks to elicit meaning of events and phenomena as such data can run the risk of being constructed from a subjective point of view. In social research it is not always possible to know exactly what a participant means. We have to go by what they say and make the most sensitive interpretation we can. Many variables can occur and in addition there is also the researcher's own frame of reference which can hold bias. Concerned essentially with the interaction of factors and events, it was necessary for the research to look closely at the teachers' and students' attitudes, behaviours and opinions. As in all qualitative research such techniques of exploration and open-mindedness can run the risk of either preventing an end goal and/or resulting in the failure to meet the aims and objectives of the study. So to reduce the chance of this possibility the research, whilst positioned within the framework of the interpretive paradigm, also adopted mixed methods of data collection. By spanning both modes of enquiry and giving the research a foundation of quantitative hard data, facts and figures, it allowed for the gathering of multiple sources of evidence across a broader section of data. The use of both quantitative and qualitative data gathering techniques, therefore, allowed for a more complete justification of the findings with the intent of an unrestricted and unbiased conclusion and with less room for ambiguities.

In planning the interviews the theoretical basis of the study was first outlined, together with its broad aims and objectives in order to make sure that the questions addressed what the research was trying to find out. Firstly the variables were identified [i.e. what was being measured] so that it was possible to construct the questions to reflect them. Thought was then given to the question format considering the interviewers insight into the student's situation, their level of education and the kind of information that they could be expected to respond to. The students' motivational level was considered and the kind of relationship that the interviewer had or might be able to develop with the respondent during the interview process. It was on the basis of this relationship that it was decided to use direct and open questions. It was felt that the respondent would then feel comfortable to reply with genuineness and sincerity. Of course, because of the open ended questions it was difficult to record and survey at the time of the interview, as some of the predetermined coding categories needed to be re-categorized. The first interview was relatively straightforward, but as each interview progressed more time was required to prepare for the next as more and more information became added to the data. Additional preparation time was also required in-between each interview for writing up the responses. Very occasionally the interviewee appeared uncomfortable in answering a particular question but because the interviewer had considerable background of the situation it was possible to motivate the interviewee to give a reply, without leading them in particular direction. This background knowledge was also advantageous on occasions when it was difficult to catch the interviewee's explanation and understand their meaning. It was nevertheless important on these occasions to play an unassuming role but with familiarity of the subject. With this flexibility and a less rigorously standardised approach, it

was possible to ensure that the whole process addressed issues relevant to the research questions and allowed for adaptation to the personality and circumstances of the person being interviewed.

Students' consent to tape record the interviews was requested at the beginning of each session, and the students were also briefed on the purpose of the interview. At the same time they were given an explanation as to the manner in which data would be collected. There was no expressed objection and the conclusion resulted in a collection of equivalent data from a number of interviewees relating to different areas of enquiry. The notes were written up into charts on sheets slotting information into the various areas, repeating and/or cross-referencing the findings. The sheets were unequally divided between different areas of interest giving a flexible amount of space to the various areas of enquiry. Each sheet also contained a section for open comments about the interviewees' chosen topics of interest.

The use of interviews helped to gain a better understanding of the teachers' and students' educational and cultural philosophies relating to teaching and learning. They helped to identify the appropriateness of the present curriculum, bearing in mind the perceived needs of the students as well as the teachers and within the context of Hong Kong. They also helped to evaluate the interaction between teachers and students as well as the general perceptions of the teaching and learning environment

As the research aimed to record behaviour collectively as a group and a 'way of life', it was decided to use unstructured observation. This allowed the research more flexibility as well as the opportunity to cast a wider net than would have been the case had a 'structured' type been used. This kind of unstructured approach, nevertheless, still required planning and a systematic approach. The researcher's knowledge and background of the enquiry under study helped to gain an insight into what kind of behaviour needed to be monitored to get the information relevant to the research. Generally the objective was to look at the environment of each classroom and observe human behaviour and relationships. This involved communication skills, problem solving, eye contact, use of voice, tone, volume, body language/gestures, smiles, frowns, etc. The classroom organization was reviewed e.g. the physical class environment, the seating arrangements, and the position and availability of equipment. Of course, teaching strategies were also carefully considered as well as student motivation, instructional techniques [the way instruction was adjusted to student learning styles] understandability, questioning, homework, use of technologies, etc. The research reviewed how the gifted student was accommodated, how the slow learner was supported and how the needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse students were addressed. The research considered the evaluation process in place, the rate of student progress, formal assessment and tests, portfolio assessment, computer applications and self-analysis of learning. Finally it considered if the teacher appeared to be enjoying his or her job, if the students were enjoying being in the classroom and whether generally there

appeared to be a positive environment in which to learn. To assist in the receiving of the data, an Observational Checklist, originally created by Tollefson [1993] and adapted for the office of Educational Development, University of California at Berkeley [2001] and further adapted for the specific use of this research was used. See Appendix 2.

Throughout the observation sessions it was possible to compare students actual approach with their personal descriptions during the interviewing sessions. In some cases where the interviewees were less willing to describe at length and in detail their participation, they were actually prepared to allow observation to take place. Like all observational research, whilst correctness and accuracy is required, inaccuracies and omissions can nevertheless occur. This is a possible weakness of any observational session, but it was found that the richness of the data collected during these sessions managed to offset any inaccuracies. As with the interview sessions, it was found that it was possible to tighten up on the observational approach as the work progressed.

In order not to make anyone feel insecure or threatened or possibly encourage participants to respond in an unpredictable manner, few enquiries were made during the observation sessions. Throughout the whole process a log was kept of all the individual elements under observation without any screening. The researcher tried to observe with an open mind and without any prejudgments. Of course it is not possible to 'see' attitudes but it is possible to 'see' behaviours and these in turn assisted in making assumptions about attitudes. The classroom contains an enormous range of possible interactions and opportunities for making decisions and interventions. In the end it was felt that these observational sessions helped the researcher gain a good understanding of the teachers' and students' educational and cultural philosophies relating to the teaching and learning process, to evaluate the perceptions of the teaching and learning environment and the overal interaction between teachers and students,

As mentioned, whilst positioned within the framework of the interpretive paradigm, the research nevertheless made use of quantitative research methods to assist in the gathering of multiple sources of evidence across a broader section of data. In this respect the use of questionnaires helped to elicit more meaning and allow for cross-referencing to iron out any ambiguities. To a certain extent the questionnaires followed a similar pattern to that of the interviews. Observation sessions allowed for comparison of the data from the survey. Five different sets of questionnaires were used in order to embrace all the objectives. Two questionnaires, which related to learning styles, were adapted from the Honey and Mumford [1982] Learning Style Questionnaires. Two more questionnaires concentrated on students' and teachers' cultural values. A final questionnaire focused on the challenges of learning through second language instruction.

The questionnaires were designed to be similar in format to those used during the interview sessions. All questions were short with a relatively simple and unambiguous language style and with clarity and without the use of hypothetical questions or 'leading' questions. They were not written in the negative with wording that could cause an objectionable response. Open questions were avoided as these were considered to be too demanding of the respondents, but space was allowed for comments should these be required. The content and type of questions generally revealed the nature of the research, which helped to maximize the students' cooperation. Questions were designed to be engaging in order to encourage co-operation and to elicit answers as close as possible to the truth.

Generally it was found that the teachers and students gave the information that was asked of them. The information collected allowed the researcher to gain a clearer understanding of both the teachers' and students' educational and cultural philosophies relating to teaching and learning. They helped to identify both the teachers' and students' understanding of the curriculum and to evaluate the perceptions of the teaching and learning environment.

3.5   METHODOLOGY FOR COLLECTING DATA

As described above, the data was collected by means of both large and small-scale research with quantitative methods forming the background to the research and qualitative methods forming the body of the research. This data was drawn from both a large screening through the collection of existing data and five sets of questionnaires and from a small screening through the collection of questionnaires, interviews and observations. See Tables 3.2 and 3.3 below:

Table : 3.2

Title : Quantitative Methods

A Statistics Taken from existing Academy data	B Questionnaire Honey & Mumford [1982] 100 students/graduates	C Questionnaire Adapted from Honey & Mumford [1982] 25 teachers	D Questionnaire Cultural Values 50 students/graduates	E Questionnaire Cultural Values 10 teachers	F Questionnaire English Language 25 Students/graduates

G Informal Interviews 10 teachers	H Informal Interviews 10 students	I Observation Adapted from Tellefson (1993) 10 class sessions

3.5 LARGE SCREENING

3.6.1 Existing Data

Existing data relating to teachers' and students' nationalities, educational experience, academic credentials and teacher appraisals were made available by The Academy's Academic Services Office for the purpose of this research. These statistics offer an understanding of The Academy's culture, against which the research can be measured and future conditions and situations can be considered.

3.6.2 Questionnaires

The research relied on a number of Questionnaires to gain an insight into both the teachers' and students' perspective of the situation and thus an understanding of the educational process. Five different sets of questionnaires, as outlined above, were exercised. Questionnaires B, D & F were mailed to graduates. Furthermore in the event that the responses might not have been readily forthcoming, questionnaires were also distributed to those alumni attending an annual alumni meeting to ensure optimum coverage. Feedback from students was reasonably assured owing to the agreement from The Academy management to distribute the questionnaires prior to the end of class sessions whilst students were focused. Permission was also granted to distribute Questionnaires C & E to teachers at the end of a school board meeting to ensure a high percentage of teacher availability.

Questionnaire B [Learning Styles Questionnaire], designed by Honey and Mumford [1986] was distributed to approximately 100 students from across the five major streams [see table 1, Column B below]. The aim of this questionnaire was to ascertain the students' approach to learning. It was chosen not only because it was well tested since it was first published in 1982, but also because in terms of validity, the accuracy of the questionnaire results have been rarely challenged, [Honey & Mumford]. Also because of its simplicity and relevance to a practical vocational training rather than merely a theoretical approach. It focused on identifying preferred learning styles, and refrained from directly enquiring into 'how' students learn [something that tends to be difficult for us to explain], but rather focused on asking questions that could be answered reasonably quickly and without too much contemplation, Honey & Mumford [1992. p.4.]. The questionnaires focused on the identification of four different learning styles and offered the key to understanding the different preferences that make learning more effective, resulting in 'raw' scores, for the four learning styles as well as 'norms' with which individual scores could be compared.

Questionnaire C, which was adapted from the same Honey and Mumford [1986] 'Learning Styles' questionnaire as described above, was distributed to approximately 25 teachers, [see table 3.4, Column C below]. It was intended to obtain data that could be used to compare teachers' expectations of the students' learning styles against the actual learning styles.

There are no right or wrong answer to the Honey & Mumford Questionnaire, which encouraged respondents to answer honestly. This resulted in a relatively accurate picture of the situation. [Honey & Mumford, 1986, p.1]

Questionnaire D, [table 3.4, Column D below] questioned students' cultural values and their educational and learning philosophies. This questionnaire was completed by 50 students and 25 Applied Arts graduates.

Questionnaire E, [table 1, column E below] questioned the cultural values and educational and teaching philosophies of teachers [of Applied Arts students] to establish an understanding of their approach to teaching. This questionnaire was distributed to 10 teachers in the department of Applied Arts.

Questionnaire F [table 3.4 below] looked at students' English language abilities and preferences. With the change of sovereignty in Hong Kong in 1997, the mother tongue language, Cantonese, has been adopted as the language of instruction in the majority of schools. This has resulted in the use of English to decline and questions the ability of students now completing their tertiary level education in English at The Academy.

The information required from all of these questionnaires [B,C,D,E,F] is highlighted in table 3.3 below:

Table : 3.3

Title : Objectives of Quantative Methods. [Large Screening]

INFORMATION REQUIRED	A Statistics taken from existing Academy data	B Questionnaire Honey & Mumford [1982] 100 students	C Questionnaire adaptedfrom Honey & Mumford [1982] 25 teachers	D Questionnaire 50 students/ graduates	E Questionnaire 10 teachers	F Questionnaire English language 25 students/ graduates
Current English Language Policy	*			*		*
Students' Language abilities	*			*		*
Nationality of staff	*					
Academic background of staff	*					
Professional experiences of staff	*					
Educational background of students	*					
Cultural experiences	*			*	*	
Teaching methodologies			*		*	
Teachers' perceptions of student's learning			*		*	
Cultural philosophies/attitudes				*	*	
Interpersonal/communication skills				*	*	
Consequences of PA through SL instruction					*	
Language Instruction Needs						
Cross-cultural interaction					*	
Learning Methodologies		*				
Learning habits		*				
Students' perceptions of teaching methods				*		

3.7   SMALL SCREENING

3.7.1   Adopting an Observational Approach.

The research relied on data that represents a personal and circumstantial perspective of a teaching and learning situation, and thus attention was needed to focus on observing students in their natural setting. Combined with interview and questionnaire methods, observation contributed to a comprehensive picture. [See table 3.5, column I below.] Observation was undertaken during classroom sessions.   It was explained that the purpose of the exercise was for acquiring invaluable data for the institution aimed at observing without judgment and without labelling or criticizing either the teacher or the students on their performances, rather than for requiring data relating to individual development. This

way any nervousness and fear often associated with observation seemed to be avoided. Experiencing classroom practices first hand helped the researcher to observe the general atmosphere of the class as well as the motivation, application, perception and general behavioural characteristics of both teachers and students. This created the opportunity to assess their thinking and led to a more authentic understanding of the situation.

This methodology required analytical thought of non-verbal as well as verbal communication of individual teachers and students as well as group interaction, a methodology that made it possible to define the social positions and shared beliefs of those being researched. Robson, [1993] advises:

> *As the actions and behaviour of people are a central aspect in virtually any inquiry, a natural and obvious technique is to watch what they do, to record this in some way and then to describe, analyse and interpret what we have observed."* p.190

In order to follow a systematic approach the observer looked at a number of issues in logical order. Ten class sessions, including major, support and interdisciplinary subjects of both practical and theoretical nature, were observed for two hrs. During each session the observer followed a set of points that helped to focus on the mechanics of the classroom interaction. At the end of each session the completed checklist was written up into a report.

What was discovered during these sessions was not used to evaluate the findings in the research, but more as a means of collecting supportive data and as an appreciation of shared circumstances when embarking on the interviews. A better understanding of the classroom environment subsequently assisted in prompting the interviewee at the interview sessions when referring to situations, and this was used in shared discussions. This offered the researcher a perspective that helped to define the social positions and shared beliefs of those being researched. Observation also helped the researcher to validate and/or challenge what was being stated in the interview sessions and confirmed that the information offered was not biased. All this offered the researcher additional perspective to help to validate and corroborate the findings.

As soon after the observation as possible, whilst situations remained clear in the mind of both the interviewer as well as the interviewee, ten teachers and ten students selected by other students from each class session, undertook an informal interview to discuss the teaching-learning process.

3.7.2   Interviews

Interviews [table 3.5, column G&H below] were conducted in English, the medium of instruction at The Academy, and they were audio taped and transcribed by the researcher. The interview questions offered a supportive and descriptive addition to the questionnaires used during the large screening, and the data gathered was used for testing and developing hypotheses. It was considered important to conduct the interviews in an informal setting with a few key questions carefully phrased in a non-confrontational manner. The interviewer was able to pursue more in depth information, which was useful as a follow-up to further investigate the responses. Questions were flexible to allow for adaptation in respect of the findings from the questionnaires as well as the observation sessions. The interview sessions adopted an accommodating approach to allow for slight modification of the set questions, according to the development of the interviews, and for probing deeper to elicit a personal perception of the teaching-learning experience. Throughout these sessions the interviewer endeavoured to develop a positive rapport with the interviewees to encourage self-expression by focusing more on the successful elements of the teaching and learning process and by identifying with the interviewee to show a genuine empathy to his/her expressed opinions. This allowed a sense of security and reduced defensive responses and thus encouraged the informants to be more outspoken with their views.

Results from a previous work by the researcher Wilkins [1998], identified Hong Kong students' tendencies to display a rather unquestioning acceptance of the knowledge of the teacher. In order, therefore, to encourage students to speak freely it was decided not to ask questions that would either result in direct comments on the curriculum and/or the teachers, or acknowledge their behaviour and attitudes. Doing so would only have encouraged the interviewees to answer what they felt was expected of them i.e. what they believed the interviewer wanted to hear. The interviewer was also aware of the importance to enter into the unique world of each individual interviewee in order to understand what each was saying to avoid interpreting answers in a way that she expected. Hycner, [1985] in Cohen and Manion [1994] warns of this danger. At the end of the interview sessions the audiotapes were listened to several times and the responses summarized and considered carefully to determine if any of the responses naturally clustered together to identify common themes and/or meanings. These common meanings were then counted and transcribed.

Table : 3.4

Title : Objectives of the Quantitative Research Methods. [Small Screening]

SMALL SCREENING			
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	**RESEARCH METHODS**		
INFORMATION REQUIRED	**G** Informal Interviews 10 teachers	**H** Informal Interviews 10 students	**I** Observation Adapted from Tellefson (1993) 10 classes
Academic background	*		
Cultural experiences	*	*	
Teaching methodologies	*		*
Learning habits		*	
Cultural philosophies/attitudes	*	*	*
Communication skills			*
Impersonal skills			*
Communication skills			*
Cross-cultural interaction	*	*	*

3.8   VALIDITY & RELIABILITY

Clearly, the strength of any research relies on the validity and reliability of data. In regard to validity, it is important to understand that this refers to the degree to which the test actually measures what it claims to measure, and also the extent to which conclusions and decisions made on the basis of test scores are appropriate and meaningful. It was important to strike a balance between the demands required of the research in pursuit of the truth and the subjects' rights and values potentially threatened by the research – known as the 'costs/ benefits ratio' as described by Cohen and Manion [1980:347]. In social research this necessitates obtaining the consent and co-operation of the participants assisting in the process of investigation, and, in the case of this research, also significant others from the institution who provided the research facilities.

To achieve greater validity it was considered important to minimize the amount of bias as much as possible. One area of concern in social research, particularly during interviews, is the possibility of any misperceptions on the part of the interviewer of what the respondent is saying and also any misunderstandings on the part of the respondent of what is being asked. Also for the questionnaires it was important to consider the characteristics of the respondents and the substantive content of the questions. With both of these concerns it was felt that because the interviewer had an 'inside' understanding of the institutional culture as well as the characteristics of the respondents, that it would be possible to minimize preconceptions or prejudices. It was also thought that the main source of bias that might arise in this particular research was in relation to the characteristics of the interviewer, her

attitudes and opinions and any tendency that might arise for her to seek answers that support preconceived notions. It was hoped that any concern in this area would be compensated by the multifarious methods and rich data collection.

The questionnaires were carefully formulated so that the questions did not influence the respondent. Whilst questionnaires can theoretically encourage more reliability because they are anonymous, some questions can have different meanings for different people. Closed questions can be considered weak because they do not allow for individual opinions, whilst if only open items are used, respondents may, for whatever reason, be unwilling to write their answers. Bearing this in mind the questionnaires were designed to contain some open questions and also gave room for extended opinions in case the respondents wanted to add their particular viewpoint. By allowing time at the end of a class the research ensured that questionnaires were not completed in a hurry.

The interviews, whilst open-ended, comprised of similar discussion to that of the questionnaires in order to allow for a comparison of the findings. An interview process is more likely to disclose personal aspects of thoughts, feelings and values than in the less personal situation of questionnaires, and so the questions were carefully formulated so that the interviewer did not influence the respondent. It was also important to make sure that the interviewer was not overly helpful by attempting to anticipate what the interviewee was trying to say and did not base questions on the assumption that the interviewer has insight into the cause of the interviewee's behaviour.

Obviously validity is necessary before reliability can be considered in any significant way. Reliability refers to the consistency of a measure and a particular process of testing. If the content of that test is not applicable, then reliability is debatable. And, as in this research, whenever humans are used as part of a measurement procedure, it is important to know that the results are reliable or consistent. Human beings are notorious for their ability to misinterpret and be inconsistent. A test is therefore only considered reliable if we can get the same result over and over again. Essentially test items need to be compared so that they measure the same construct to establish internal consistency.

In order to gauge reliability the questions raised in both the questionnaires and the interviews, although to a certain degree different, were nevertheless designed to be similar to each other in order to measure the same thing and test internal consistency. This way by replicating the procedure to produce similar results, consistency was ensured and a degree of confidence was ascertained in the research.

Cohen and Manion [1994, p.327] refer to problems of both internal and external validity in observation-based research. They also point out that bias may arise from the characteristics of the interviewer, the characteristics of the respondent, and the substantive content of the questions. The

same authors refer to the possibility that observers' judgment will be affected by their close involvement in the group, which in turn leads to concerns about internal validity. Essentially it was felt that the research was able to take in a broad enough sample of tests to emphasize important materials and measure what was intended to measure. Any bias associated with the characteristics of the interviewer and the interviewees, and the researchers close association with the group, was addressed at a number of levels by cross-checking through the use of differing research techniques [interviews, observation etc.] at the end of each study. In terms of reliability, it was felt that overall the research was able to show consistency and authenticity in order to yield credible results.

In terms of the actual research methods, it was felt that the use of an entirely 'soft' interpretative approach would likely have resulting in large amounts of complex qualitative information that could prove difficult to analyze, resulting in research that lacked structure. By contrast positivist methods were able to offer the researcher a clear dimension and help to throw light on what might be inferred but not quantified. Through the use of both large and small scale research, by repeating the process through the different methods of questionnaires, interviews and observation, together with the support of background data, it was possible to crosscheck the findings and reduce inaccuracies and prejudices and quantify the results. Table 3.5 below offers a clear picture of the research tools and why and how they were used:

Table : 3.5

Title : Research Tools and their Usage

Tools	Why these tools were used	How the tools contributed
Statistics	To offer a framework to the case study and background information to the institution.	Gave the research a framework from which the present situation could be measured and future conditions could be considered.
Teaching & Learning Styles Questionnaires	To obtain data to facilitate the understanding and comparison of teachers' expectations of the students learning styles and students' actual learning styles.	Identified students' preferred learning styles against which teachers' approaches to teaching could be measured.
Cultural Value Questionnaire	To obtain information relating to both the teachers' and students' cultural values and educational philosophies	To understand both the teachers' and students' perspective of the situation
English Language Questionnaire	To assess students' English language abilities and preferences.	Helped to gain a better understanding of the restrictions that 2nd language instruction places on the learning experience
Observations Sessions	To gain a better understanding of the general atmosphere of the class and the behavioural characteristics of both teacher and student.	This led to a more authentic understanding of the situation and helped to validate and challenge what was being stated in the interviews.
Informal Interviews	To pursue more in-depth information and offer a supportive and descriptive addition to the questionnaires used during the large screening.	Helped to elicit similar and/or contrasting perspectives of the situation and more in-depth information. Ascertained validity and reliability of the data collected from the large screening.
Follow up Questionnaire	To investigation students' opinions on the research project and its process.	Obtained students' opinions of whether (in the eyes of the students), the research was meaningful and useful

Such a multi-method approach made it possible to identify variance in the data's validity and offered a balanced and ethical framework within which to operate. It provided an unrestricted and unbiased assessment and allowed the data to be considered from different angles. This helped to eliminate the potential problem of personal bias from the researcher, which in a predominantly qualitative research process lead by someone familiar with the institution, might otherwise have proved difficult.

3.8.1 Using Triangulation

In the past positivist and interpretive methods have traditionally been considered as separate and opposite approaches to research, implying that one method of research cannot make use of the other. Researchers tended not to switch between these strict dichotomies of methods, but as Johnson, [1984] advises, mixing qualitative and quantitative methods is a good idea, because it facilitates triangulation:

> *"social research can be strengthened by 'triangulation', that is by honing in on evidence from several points of view."* p.8

Hammersely and Atkinson, [1989 p.199] in Johnson [1984] refer to the advantage of triangulation in making a research project valid:

> *"What is involved in triangulation is not the combination of different kinds of data per se, but rather an attempt to relate different sorts of data in such a way as to counteract various possible threats to the validity of our analysis."* p.8

The advantage of being able to call on a range of positivist and interpretive paradigms [see above] allowed for contrasting perspectives and a fuller picture of the inquiry, reducing inaccuracies and prejudices. Repeating a process through different methods, and looking at the project from several points of view resulted in more reliable data and confidence in the conclusion.

3.8.2 Follow Up Questionnaire

A follow up questionnaire was also used to help ascertain the reliability of a student's opinion on the overall research process and its objectives. The Questionnaire, distributed to 50 students, asked whether they welcomed such research to contribute to the improvement of the teaching and learning environment at The Academy. It questioned their opinion of the observational sessions, if they felt comfortable and uninhibited during these sessions and did not feel intimidated by the presence of others and whether they were able to state their view honestly. It inquired into the interview

questionnaires to clarify if the questions captured key concerns and whether they felt able to state their views unreservedly. Most of all it asked if they enjoyed their involvement in the research, and whether they felt motivated by the discussions.   Valued on a five-point scale, the Questionnaire measured the extent to which students felt there were sufficient channels to voice their opinions on matters relating to teaching and learning, whether they were able to express their views unreservedly and whether they could speak freely and truthfully during the interview without worrying about others' responses.

3.9   PILOT STUDY

To ensure that the research objectives were met, a pilot study of both the large and small screening was undertaken with a representational group of staff and students drawn from the overall study population. Both questionnaires and interview questions underwent a purposive sampling to test and highlight any ambiguities.   Questionnaires were distributed to five graduates and ten students representing different year levels and major courses. It was originally planned to distribute them in both Chinese and English to give the respondents flexibility to choose the language of their preference and to make them engaging and ensure 100% comprehension.   However, an accurate translation of the English text proved difficult leading to potential confusion, and it was therefore decided to distribute the questionnaires in English only.   For a small population of students it was noted that some of the questions was too complex for them to fully understand, resulting in a potentially false interpretation of their feelings and beliefs. These questions were reviewed and in most cases simplified. The interview questions were also tested on a small group of teachers and students. In some cases it was noted that the students struggled with comprehension but with verbal questions there is always an opportunity for the interviewer to express the meaning in different ways to help with understanding. In most cases this resulted in more or less full comprehension. For the observational survey, two one-hour class sessions were observed where the actions of both the teacher and the students were noted in accordance with the observational checklist. Some of the points in the checklist proved to be complicated. These were simplified to gain better consistency amongst the ten different observational sessions.

Responses from the pilot questionnaires and the observational sessions were analyzed and the necessary adjustments were made. Then the substituted questions were re-tested before the final sets of questionnaires were distributed and interview questions put to use.

3.10   ETHICAL ISSUES.

It was felt that the pilot study uncovered ethical issues in advance of the research proper, and that a balance was struck where it was possible to proceed ethically without threatening the validity of the research. The aim of the research was in no way subversive and as such it did not appear to produce

any source of tension between any of the sets of associated principles. As mentioned earlier, institutions around the world, including those in Hong Kong, are investigating ways of improving the quality of their education. The subject in question, therefore, is not one of a controversial nature and should not be a cause for any source of tension. However, it is understood that in the quest for data, difficulties might arise which could involve misunderstandings. To alleviate this possibility, the interest of the participants was considered when deciphering and using the data. All information was treated with the strictest confidence and all interviewees were given the opportunity to verify statements. Whilst the participants' confidentiality was respected, it was also important to let informants know that it is not always possible to conceal identities completely and that anonymity can sometimes be compromised unintentionally.

In order to maintain confidentiality [particularly in a 'one institution' situation] it was necessary for the researcher, the one asking the questions and doing the observation, to be more scrupulous than those imparting the information. It was necessary to be aware of the possibility of cross-fertilization of information and it was important to refrain from making comments to one respondent based on apparently 'generally known information' supplied by another, which may in fact be new to the respondent. In this respect the veil of anonymity can be thin and so it was important to take particular care to protect those contributing to the research so no one experienced any type of 'kick back'. Whilst it was not always possible for the interviewees to remain anonymous during the process, the researcher did not make the association known. For those participants who agreed to a face-to-face interview, anonymity could not be ensured as their identification could be discovered from the information given. However, confidentiality was promised as the names of the individuals were not disclosed and the connection was not made public. In all cases the interviewees were referred to in generic terms, and no names were revealed. In addition all data was transcribed by the researcher and no third party was involved.

During the interview processes, whilst some participants appeared inhibited, others were prepared to say anything and also use the opportunity to unburden themselves of various problems. In all cases these participants were protected from their own indiscretion by making use of the material in a tactful or sanitised way, or not using it at all. It would also have been counterproductive to use seniority to lean on students and form a coercive approach. This would have inhibited rapport and reduce communication. It was obvious that a limited number of participants really did not know, or want to know, enough detail about the research to be able to make informative comments and so in this case the information collected was discarded.

As the researcher is well known in The Academy, a covert approach in regard to observational aspects of the research was not considered to be appropriate. Evidence from previous research, Wilkins,

[1998], however, suggests that the students learning habits are sufficiently structured for the observer's presence not to inhibit the normal classroom environment. By making clear the researcher's position from the start, it was possible to establish relationships with members of the group who, whenever necessary, were able to assist the research outcome by translating their actions.

3.11   CRITICAL EVALUATION

The methodologies used in this research were chosen because it was felt that they would facilitate an open dialogue and encourage honest and accurate information about the interviewee's experiences and feelings of the educational process at The Academy. As already explained, the research process purposely adopted an informal approach so that those involved in it would in no way feel threatened and become defensive.

Every precaution was taken to ensure maximum validity to the project, but in the end there is, of course, no proof that those involved did exhibit an honest and open view on the topics discussed and the degree to which the final assumptions are valid. It was therefore felt that a follow-up questionnaire to all students would add extra value. It was concluded that it would be better to administer this questionnaire individually and in private to all participants and in Chinese for ease of understanding. The hope was that the students would speak freely and state their views unreservedly on the overall research discussion and its objectives.

3.12   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As previously mentioned, The Academy is the only institution in Hong Kong that provides professional training and education in both Chinese and Western performing and technical arts. For this reason, while The Academy was an ideal place to conduct research, it is acknowledged by the researcher that this study would have benefited from data gathered from more than this one institution. Had there been another performing arts institution in Hong Kong, particularly one that houses an Applied Arts department, then data collection, analysis and conclusions reached would have no doubt benefited this study.

4.   PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1   RESEARCH CONCERNS, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The diverse range of concerns, aims and objectives attached to the research demanded an extensive investigation involving a careful examination of the relationship of the host culture with that of the imported education policy. By investigating the teachers' and students' educational and cultural philosophies, their perception of teaching and learning, as well as their actual teaching and learning styles, the research was able to identify those areas considered successful in the training of Applied Arts. At the same time it was possible to identify the weaknesses in the existing curriculum that only partially serve the needs of the students.

The nature of the study involved relatively sensitive social issues, which revealed a number of ambiguous phenomena and teaching and learning perspectives, on the part of both teachers and students. As predicted, the exercise exposed prejudices and brought biased answers that were relatively complex and sometimes obscure. It would have been difficult to reach the end goal had the research not made use of a variety of research methods.

There were concerns that data gathered during the observational sessions may have been inaccurate, as the observer's presence may have affected student behaviour, or students or teachers could have been experiencing a 'bad day'.   After consideration, however, it was felt that the duration of the sessions, as well as the number of sessions observed, reduced the chances of inaccuracies. Contrived behaviour, it was noted, proved difficult for the students to maintain over a period of time and as staff and students were called upon to cooperate with the research, they soon grew accustomed to the observer's presence.

4.2   BACKGROUND TO THE CURRICULUM

The correlation table 4.1 below compares The Academy year levels for the Diploma and Degree programmes with other educational institutions' year levels and identifies local and international equivalencies to help the reader put training levels into context.

Table : 4.1

Title : Correlation of Academic Year Levels with other Educational Institutions

THE ACADEMY	HONG KONG SAR	UNITED KINGDOM	UNITED STATES	AUSTRALIA	MAINLAND CHINA
Diploma Yr 1	Form 6	Year 12	Grade 12	Year 11	Senior Middle 3
Diploma Yr 2	Form 7	Year 13	Freshman	Year 12	Degree Yr. 1
Adv. Dip/Degree Yr 1	Degree Yr. 1	Degree Yr. 1	Sophomore	Degree Yr. 1	Degree Yr. 2
Adv. Dip/Degree Yr 2	Degree Yr. 1	Degree Yr. 2	Junior	Degree Yr. 2	Degree Yr. 3
Adv. Dip/Degree Yr 3	Degree Yr. 1	Degree Yr. 3	Senior	Degree Yr. 3	Degree Yr. 4

The two-year Diploma programme at The Academy is predominantly a foundation level course admitting students who have graduated from Form 5 secondary level with passes [Grade E or above] in five subjects in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination [HKCEE] including English and Chinese. On completion of the Diploma programme, students may apply to continue their studies at The Academy on either a two-year Advanced Diploma programme or a three-year Degree programme. In addition, working professionals or graduates from similar arts courses may enrol for a one year Professional Diploma [PD]. The study programmes offered by The Academy are illustrated in the following diagram:

Fig : 4.1

Title : Study Programmes at The Academy

BFA: Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree
PD: Professional Diploma
AD: Advanced Diploma
D: Diploma
HKALE: HK Advanced Level Examination
HKCEE: HKCertificate of Education Examination

4.3   BACKGROUND OF STAFF

The Academy prides itself on the diverse nationalities of its staff. In the BFA Degree Submission to the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation it states:

> *"The eclecticism in the Academy is supported by a specialist international staff of diverse nationalities and professional backgrounds."* p.3.

The range of nationalities in the School of Technical Arts (TA) are shown in Fig. 4.2 below:

Fig : 4.2
Title : Nationalities of Staff in TA School

Staff Nationality in TA School

Whilst the diversity of nationalities teaching at The Academy might be seen as a positive characteristic, it is nevertheless important to understand the challenges and complications that these diverse nationalities and backgrounds bring to the overall direction. In fact what we can see from Fig: 4.3 below is that only 7% of teachers have worked previously outside of their country of origin, highlighting potentially limited practice in cross-cultural encounters. This begs the question whether the eclecticism of the Academy is successful.

Fig : 4.3

Title : Cultural Experiences of Faculty Members

Cultural Experience of Faculty Members

□ Vacation Travel

■ Vacation Travel > 10 Countries

□ > 6 Mth. Outside Country of Origin

□ Previous Employment Outside Country of Origin

12%   7%

46%

35%

Investigation into cross-cultural encounters and experiences revealed the number of times each member of the teaching staff has travelled or worked outside of their countries of origin. What became obvious from this data is that working professionally overseas was a relatively new experience for the majority of teachers.

With such a high percentage of teachers with limited or no intercultural experience, the question that arises is the level of cultural insight and relevant perspectives they can share in the community. Do they understand the different values, expectations and negotiating techniques? Do they understand the historical, social and political perspectives? Do they have the tools needed to interact appropriately and effectively? Do they understand and appreciate the intercultural differences that ultimately lead to a clearer communication? Can they break down barriers, build trust and strengthen relationships? Do they understand the social etiquette? Do they have an instilled understanding of the culture and working styles?

This lack of cultural experience on the part of the teachers brings the questions into institutions' overall cultural viability and challenges the common goals and overall direction. It cannot be disputed that culture is a complex concept, with different definitions that are shaped by different historical experiences. Simply put, culture refers to a group or community who share a common experience that shapes the way they understand the world. Culture can be explained as a "lens" through which we view the world. Culture is central to what we see, how we make sense of what we see, and how we express ourselves. It is seen differently through the eyes of the student and the teacher. Misunderstandings may occur, resulting in possible conflicts and a dysfunctional partnership.
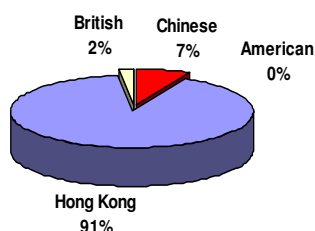
Culture can often be at the root of communication challenges and how we participate and communicate in groups as well as how we approach our work together. It can affect in whether we are able to achieve a positive outcome. Inexperienced teachers may not be aware that their own cultural values or assumptions are different from others and they may not realize that the way they enter into

multicultural dialogue or collaboration can be at the root of communication difficulties. From culture to culture there are different ways that people complete tasks, how they deal with conflict, how they build relationships and work together, how they come to decisions, deal with emotions and how they acquire information. If the teachers do not understand these deeper philosophies, they will not have a deep enough understanding of the challenges they are likely to encounter when working in different cultures. By understanding these deeper philosophies, we can gain a mirror image of our own cultural background, which in turn will help us to understand our own frames of reference. This understanding will give us the opportunity to challenge our assumptions about the 'right' or 'wrong' way to do things and give us an appreciation of the patterns of cultural differences that can assist us in processing what it means to be different in ways that are respectful of others.

4.4   BACKGROUND OF STUDENTS

Data relating to students' cultural and educational origins was taken from the department of Applied Arts and revealed a fairly singular cultural, educational background and philosophy. The survey revealed 91% of Applied Arts students originated from Hong Kong, the other 7% from China and 2% from the United Kingdom. See Fig 4.4 below:

Fig: 4.4
Title : Student' Cultural Origin

The educational background of those 91% Hong Kong students revealed a body of students with common educational backgrounds and life experiences. These students have practised the same cultural and educational development for the whole of their young lives. In order for new learning to take place, teachers need to recognize the students' world. They need to recognize and accept students' beliefs and practices and understand that students feel that The Academy reflects their cultural community. The Academy needs to promote the well being of each individual by affirming the cultural, traditional, spiritual and world-view of all the students. See Table 4.2 below:

Table : 4.2

Title : Educational Background of the 91% Hong Kong Students

	Primary Education	**Secondary Education**
Hong Kong	50	48
China	4	4
Oversees	1	1
TOTAL	55	53

71% of Applied Arts students enrolled in The Academy at diploma level and 29% entered at degree level. These statistics, taken from the 2004 cohort represent a comparatively high proportion of students in the department who enter at junior level as compared to all the other departments within the Academy. Whether this is evidence that the Applied Arts students tend to be less academically inclined and prefer to leave secondary school at the earliest possible exit point, or whether they have discovered their career paths earlier than others is not clear.

In regard to students cultural experiences, it seems that whilst almost 60% of students have travelled overseas for vacation purposes, only 3% have been involved in overseas study, either full time or part-time, identifying relatively little opportunity for any bona fide cultural exchange.

Table 4.3

Title : Students' Cultural Experiences

Students who have travelled overseas for vacation purposes	60%
Students who have engaged in overseas educational/cultural exchanges	3%

4.5   SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS SURROUNDING THE EDUCATIONAL CULTURE OF THE ACADEMY.

Except in the case of 'special learning needs' groups, the Hong Kong primary and secondary education system is predominantly mainstream. Conformity and uniformity are seen as crucial elements and there is no provision to divide students into different ability groups to encourage individual talent.

The system fosters a belief that all students must keep up with measured academic levels. Students who fail examinations are obliged to retake and pass before they can proceed, and because students are not encouraged, or even in some cases not allowed, to speak in class, it becomes extremely difficult for them to participate even if they felt they wanted to.

These are characteristics of the HK education system that have been in place for many years and thus the 'Hong Kong Educational Reform proposals' considered for both primary and secondary school levels might be considered a welcome change. The proposal for all students to spend 5% of timetabled time on the "aesthetic experience" section of the "other learning experiences" area of the proposed curriculum is aimed at generating creative thought. 83% of the respondents to the questionnaire considered these reform proposals as too little and too superficial with regard to arts education. One lecturer of design commented:

> While they will have some effect, they do not really address the context, and the effect will be limited. It will not ensure an adequate arts education. 5% of the timetable is not enough.

The Theatre History lecturer said of the reform policy:

> There will still remain a significant gap in theatre and arts education at secondary level and that required for studying at The Academy".

However, 63% of respondents thought it might allow the Academy the ability to drop some of the courses that concentrate on developing student's independence and as a consequence gain time to work on more creative expression through challenging art projects.   This it was hoped would speed up the learning process and allow students to gain higher levels of achievement whilst at The Academy.

As mentioned, 83% of staff were sceptical that this change would make any difference and suggested that regardless of government proposals, The Academy curriculum should be reviewed at a structural level and the second year of the diploma programme be subsumed into a 4-year undergraduate degree with a 3-year graduate degree programme to parallel Mainland China's structure. The first year of the diploma programme, it was strongly felt, should become a Foundation programme. [Academic Board meeting AB03/04] See revised chart below:

Fig. 4.5

Title : Proposed Study Programmes at The Academy

BFA: Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree
PD: Professional Diploma
AD: Advanced Diploma
D: Diploma
HKALE: H K Advanced Level Examination
HKCEE: HKCertificate of Education Examination

In discussion staff members encouraged the idea that the curriculum should move away from the present American model and either develop a totally independent system and strive for educational autonomy or look further towards China for its direction. Paralleling with China, it was thought, would increase Hong Kong and Chinese students' mobility and could facilitate a year's study in both China and Hong Kong. The need for greater reciprocity within the two systems, i.e. Hong Kong and China, was suggested by 62% of the staff interviewed, who commented that The Academy should be able to accept students from the mainland for one-year training at both under-graduate and graduate levels. The present educational model of the credit unit system has the opportunity to facilitate a mobile society, which is good for a large nation like China and is the way that some believe that Hong Kong should go.   The Degree, some commented, should be transferable and mobile, allowing students to choose to begin at one university and collect credits that are recognized in another. It was recognized by some of the interviewees that Mainland Chinese conservatoires are very traditional in their educational approach.   This raised the question whether the two systems, with their individual approaches, could be compatible. It was however; considered that this would give the students more career options. The Head of Design pointed out:

> *"Hong Kong has a limited population pool to draw from and the chances of The Academy's significant yearly intake becoming 'artists' of the first rank is specious."*

In this regard, he went on,

> *"If The Academy were to look towards China the curriculum could reflect a broader range of possibilities at which students would ultimately find success upon graduation –*
>
> *as teachers, writers, researchers, support personnel, administrators, etc – as well as the 10% or so who will become first rate artists."*

Most teachers agreed that the atmosphere at The Academy was becoming more directly connected to the local culture, a change it was noted that is developing consequentially rather than designed purposely. The Academy introduced a Cantonese Opera stream at Diploma level in the year 2000, but this is seen more as an annex to the school, rather than integrated into the programme. Overall there was a general opinion that courses that reflect European influence should not be decreased but courses reflecting Chinese culture should also be included. A swing toward Asian culture away from the more usual western influence might include increased attention to Asian cultural history, perhaps folklore, Chinese drama and Chinese opera courses. Not only would this have the effect of broadening the students' career opportunities but it would also give students the idea that the Academy was reflecting their cultural heritage. It would help to promote the well being of all students by acknowledging their cultural heritage and showing an appreciation of cultural distinctions.

It was widely believed that the only way that real change to the standard of the student intake could occur is through the introduction of specialist secondary schools. As noted in other countries, student success in these types of institutions demonstrate that the success is not limited to simply providing better prepared arts students, but to contributing to the changing of the culture. Much discussion was given to this solution, but it was nevertheless understood by 76% of interviewees that this kind of structural change was not likely to take place in the short term. It was generally felt that changes to encourage students to think more independently and creatively would need to be addressed within The Academy curriculum. In this regard, concern was raised by 78% of those interviewed that the present three-year Bachelor of Fine Arts [BFA] structure does not allow time for exposure to the broader curriculum needed for a more in-depth understanding of the arts.

Concern was raised by 63% of interviewees that the primary and secondary education system does not prepare students in aesthetic experiences, resulting in a significant gap in arts education for studying at

The Academy. Government plans to change the curriculum might in the long term free up time from the introductory courses at The Academy, but it was considered by these interviewees that this would be too little and too superficial to make any significant difference. The idea of introducing specialist secondary schools was felt unlikely to happen in the short term; creative thinking would therefore need to be addressed within the Academy curriculum. This it was proposed should take place through a 4-year undergraduate degree with a 3-year graduate degree to parallel mainland China's structure.

4.6 CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HOST CULTURE.

Decoding the characteristics of the people of the host culture is no simple task, and it is easy to understand Bond's remarks when he talks about the distinctive features of the way the Chinese think. Academic research points out that Chinese students tend to score relatively higher than their Western counterparts on spatial, numerical, or non-verbal intelligence tests, but less well on verbal aptitude. Indeed it was noted during the observation sessions how the students tend to be weak in debating skills, with the consequence that they rarely engage in persuasive argument, a characteristic that almost certainly results from their secondary school education. When questioned on this issue the students concurred with this theory:

Table : 4.4

Title : Cultural Characteristics

	Results from Questionnaire D	YES	NO
1	Are you able to brainstorm options and enter into meaningful dialogue with your teachers	36%	64%
2	Are you confident in proposing ideas	33%	67%
3	Are you comfortable engaging in critical discussion	31%	69%
4	Do you feel comfortable when asked to express your opinion and ideas	76%	24%
5	Do you feel that you are given the opportunity to express yourself in class or enter into meaningful discussions	52%	48%

Throughout the research it was noted that whilst students' memorization skills and attention to detail is noticeably strong, they nevertheless lack confidence in creative expression and verbal fluency. Brainstorming in the West is a useful and popular tool in secondary schools and universities to help develop creative solutions to a problem, but asking The Academy students to brainstorm ideas with teachers and enter into critical discussions is a challenge. It is evident that they are not comfortable in discussing options or expressing new ideas. Whilst this may be because they have not practised this in their previous education and are not experienced in critical thinking, it must also have to do with their reluctance to think on their feet and in a second language. However, it appears that they do have more confidence when given personal time outside of the classroom to develop new patterns of thinking and/or new ways of looking at things. If they are allowed time to develop their opinions and ideas and

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given the opportunity to prepare before presenting them, they are then much more confident and able to express themselves. This can be illustrated in the questionnaires as shown above. The apparent anomaly between the response to the questions 1-3 and question 4 explains this difference.

It seems that The Academy educational system does not match the general beliefs and social infrastructure of the society. The policies that have been set in place to try to individualize the curriculum are at odds with the learning expectations of the students. These expectations revolve around the students' unique characteristics and their ability in memorization, their sensitivity to surface patterns and attention to detail. Visual and spatial ability which are not being recognized and individual traits are not being tapped, developed or used as a learning base on which to connect new learning.

4.7   THE CURRICULUM

Overall opinions relating to the curriculum were copious. During the interview process both staff and students acknowledged that The Academy system follows, quite closely, the American education system in that there are liberal arts courses, mid-term reviews, finals, and an abundance of projects and lists of deadlines. As one of the lecturers of Costume Construction pointed out:

> *"Students are monitored, mentored and advised. It is a progressive curriculum and in most respects, no different to teaching in the west in that students begin with the basics then move to intermediate and advanced levels in all the theoretical and practical skill areas."*

The difference however, as she pointed out:

> *"lies in the fact that students have few opinions of their own and are not prepared to contribute in either thought or discussions. They also know very little about the performing arts and have to be put very speedily and aggressively through tougher and tougher paces in second language instruction in what turns out to be a culturally unfamiliar and stressful environment."*

The lack of theatre and arts education in Hong Kong secondary schools is evident at the interview stage when most student applicants show difficulty in discussing cultural experiences and are unable to demonstrate knowledge in performing arts. This was expressed by more that 70% of the teaching staff.

Initially the students seem oblivious to the differences between the academic approach of The Academy and that of the Hong Kong primary and secondary level. This, the research identified, is

something that is never discussed amongst faculty in an open forum and probably should be. The lecturer of Production Management expressed his concern that students may not understand The Academy system and find it difficult to take advantage of the learning opportunity - he questioned *"why do we assume they are able to cope? We expect them to be mature university students - but they are not".*

75% of those teachers interviewed expressed a strong feeling that the curriculum should be stream-lined. The Scenic Art Lecturer talked about how The Academy has grown *"from a relatively small institute to a relatively large one, [although we are still relatively small]."* He used an analogy of seeds that have blossomed into full-grown trees and now need pruning, *"each department"* he explained, *"has been allowed to grow and expand under its own direction for a number of years and now there is too much information for the student to deal with."* It was generally recognized by most of the staff that the content of The Academy syllabus is complex and more structured than comparative courses in the West. A typical day at The Academy starts at 9.00 a.m. with two 2-hour lectures every morning and then one 2-hour lecture on two afternoons per week. These lectures are well organized and illustrated, but the students seem unable to absorb much, even after the first lecture class. The professionally focused curriculum presently on offer is divided into so many classroom segments, scheduled so closely together, that many, perhaps most, students find it difficult to retain and to process the information they receive. Performing artists need to absorb and experiment with new ideas and techniques. The tendency to create classes in which as many sub-specialties are taught as can be crammed into the allotted time, results in students who never learn that they are capable of learning a great many things they have never been expressly taught.

There is also the rigid Academy production structure, which is offered most afternoons, but which (according to some) also does not seem to offer what is needed as an educational tool.

A lecturer in Stage Management pointed out:

> *"The productions don't offer support to the freethinking and creativity that is needed to expose the students to a much broader and ultimately more stimulating prospect of possibilities. With learning often happening on productions, classes then become bitty because students treat them with a 'tick in the box' approach",* she went on to say, *"Students often fail to make the connection with what they learn in class and what is required to mount a production and fail to bring the theatrical knowledge to a practical situation resulting in their inability to apply it to a production."*

Furthermore a lecturer of the Diploma programme pointed out that she believed The Academy to be too 'class' based for a vocational institution with not enough integration between class theory and practice. She went on to say that students require specific instruction and direction and explained how, *"a successful learning outcome requires a continual process of teach and apply, teach and apply."* Some teachers even suggested that unit teaching or block teaching, involving intensive teaching with direct application to projects, might be better.

Concerns relating to the course content were divided into three categories: course content, teaching methodology and course levels. Students' comments about these categories can be seen in table 4.5 below. Basically it seems that responses to these questions relate to a failure to make the connection between what they study in class and what they experience when working on a production. They need to be encouraged to make the connection between class assignments and production process and treat them as one objective rather than considering them as separate units.

Table : 4.5

Title: Issues of Course Content

Results from Questionnaire D	%
Repeats what was taught at secondary school	32%
Course content is not related to daily use	30%
Syllabus does not address the needs to survive in the performing arts industry	44%
Teaching schedule is very slow	40%

The Applied Arts curriculum itself is strong, but is nevertheless overreaching its mandate and is being seduced by the performing schools production requirements, which monopolize much time and energy and demand excessive time with unrealistic deadlines. The content of the syllabus, whilst sound, nevertheless seems more complex and highly structured than comparative courses in the West.

4.8   CONSEQUENCES OF PERFORMING ARTS THROUGH SECOND LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

Hong Kong students are expected to function in three languages – English, Cantonese and Putungua. This is demanding by any standards, but nevertheless a requirement set by the government for all students at tertiary level.   At The Academy the students communicate together in Cantonese, and in class to the teachers in English and/or Putungua, and they are required to take language classes in both English and Putongua. At the time of writing all students are required to take the following language course. [See Appendix 5 for further details].

Table: 4.6

Title: Language Commitment

Year Level	Language Instruction 2/hr per week (30 weeks per academic year)	Total Teaching Hours
Diploma 1	English	60hrs
Diploma 2	English & Putonghua	60hrs + 60hrs
BFA1 / AD1	English & Putonghua	60hrs + 60 hrs
BFA2 / AD2	English	60hrs
BFA3	Elective-English or Putonghua	60 hrs

Learning performing arts through the media of a second language is an additional challenge that the students at The Academy face. The Bachelor of Fine Arts [BFA] [Honours] degree submission to the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation [1996], states:

> *"Students should have the English language ability to meet their immediate practical and academic needs within The Academy, and to develop interactive English language skills relevant to their long-term career needs."* p.36

However, given the complexity of the language system in Hong Kong and the Government's decision to shift language emphasis from English to Chinese [Cantonese] at primary and secondary level, it is questionable whether students graduating from the secondary level system have the language ability to meet the academic demands set by The Academy. What we are seeing is a wide variety of language abilities. A disparity that produces mixed levels of language ability within a group of students of similar levels of academic achievement results in many students being placed in a disadvantageous position. Although of the same nationality and studying in their country of origin, the situation students now find themselves in bears a strong correlation to immigrant students in the West who are mainstreamed into regular classrooms to be taught through the medium of English. For learners who do not yet have full command of a language, the effect of learning through that language is one that gives rise to detrimental results on students' intellectual development. In 1973 this concern was expressed in a paper entitled "At What cost?" [Cheng et al. 1973] in which it was noted that in order to help students learn, teachers resorted to a mixed code of instruction. [Brimer et al 1985] undertook an extensive study that examined the academic achievement of students of different English proficiency levels. The study identified that only students with a high level of English proficiency [estimated to be about 30% of the total student population] could benefit from English medium instruction and those students with low English proficiency would be seriously disadvantaged.

Throughout the research it was evident that teaching through the medium of English raised many difficulties. The curriculum supposes a student body capable of communicating effectively, in a meaningful and collaborate way, but it seems that students' English proficiency levels puts them at a

disadvantage. The major concern was the difficulty in establishing an atmosphere where students feel free to express themselves and to explore thoughts and feelings in a non-native speaking environment. They enter The Academy at a grade level where the cognitive and linguistic expectations are complex, and they are expected to participate in high grade-level instruction. However, to meet students linguistic and cognitive levels instructional modifications are necessary, and this has an effect on the success of the quality of education the students receive.

It was evident during the observational sessions that the teachers strive to work out what level to pitch class content at and how to make it relevant and understandable to students whose English language proficiency is not adequate. They try hard to ensure that students do not get behind in their academic development because of their linguistic difficulties by keeping the content not just challenging and exciting but also clear and precise. But, as they reported, it is difficult to isolate content and language from each other, which results in difficulties in identifying whether students do not know the content material or are in fact unable to demonstrate their understanding because of language deficiencies [see Appendix 2]. Notwithstanding these difficulties, 60% of students identified a preference that their studies be conducted through English because of the benefits to their future career. Many students identified a desire to work overseas to establish either long or short-term careers. 55% identified an aspiration to be more "international" with the ability to communicate in English as a pre-requisite for a cosmopolitan outlook and for social and economic success. 52% of students identified a need to be able to communicate well in English with their teachers at The Academy. Only 33% identified the desire to be able to read and study English books, which was disappointing since most of the information and research books in performing arts are written in English – the key, perhaps to success in the academic and professional world. See chart below.

Table : 4.7

Title : Reasons for Wanting English Language Instruction

Results from Questionnaire D	
A. For my future career	60%
B. To talk to English speaking teachers at the Academy	52%
C. To read and study English books	33%
D. To become more "international"	55%

With regard to English studies, 90% of the students said they felt it was important to attend English classes and of that 90%, 67% expressed a need to improve the current English syllabus at the Academy.

Students understanding of their own competencies in these languages are set out below:

Title : Students Language Abilities

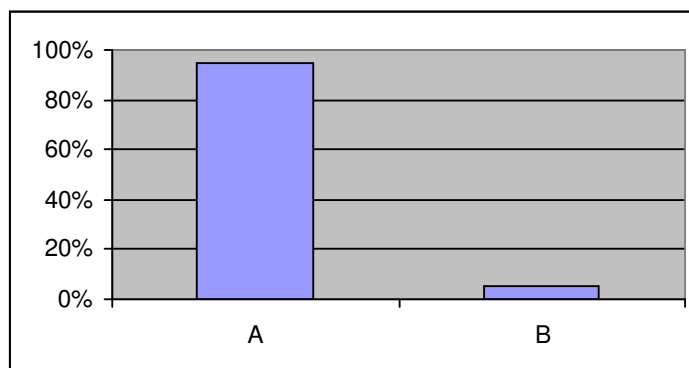| LANGUAGE ABILITIES	Understand	Speak
Chinese (Cantonese)	91.5%	91.9%
English	68.6%	65.8%
Putonghua	61.9%	55.6%
Other Chinese dialects (8)	37.8%	36.1%
Other European languages	1.9%	1.8%
Others	0.4%	0.3%

Data from The Academy language entry requirements[1] and the 2002/3 HKCEE English and Chinese language grade results revealed 93% of entry level students obtained a minimum language requirement in both English and Putonghua, as stipulated by The Academy. The overall results identified a 12% drop in the standard of English compared to the previous year.

Table : 4.9

Title : Level of Language Abilities

A = Minimum Level   B = Advanced level

Clearly learning through the medium of English for those 93% students is very demanding and the system affords much debate. Notwithstanding this obstacle a high proportion of both Western and Chinese teachers supported the principle that Arts studies should nevertheless continue to be taught in English. *"It is the diplomatic language and the common language of the world",* one teacher stated. *"If we require our graduates to be international then the first language should naturally be English, not to mention that Hong Kong has 160 years of history with England. Students should be able to make the transition from English instruction to Chinese thinking without much difficulty,"* the Head of Applied Arts commented. It was also pointed out by other teachers that working in two and sometimes three languages ultimately broadens one's horizons.

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[1] APA Language entry requirements stipulate that all students must obtain a pass at grade D in syllabus A (lower level), or grade E in syllabus B (higher level) in English Language, and a pass at grade D in Chinese Language in the HKCEE examinations.

However, it is clear throughout the research that students' English levels put them at an educational disadvantage. A number of teachers pointed to students' limited vocabulary as a definite handicap as students experience difficulty in comprehending and expressing concepts. It is clear that the Academy's literacy environment does not allow for the effective communication and interaction that is required in performing arts training; usually seen in terms of fluency in mother-tongue language. Indeed it was agreed by most teachers and students alike that working in a second language is inhibiting. Most agreed that the student is more likely to perform better in first language instruction. *"Whilst English language instruction opens up worlds, students are often embarrassed to speak out",* the lecturer of Props Construction stated. This restricts ideas. It is a double edge sword. Some teachers prioritized that professional training should come first. Whilst it was understood that performing arts reference books all tend to be in English, thus stipulating the necessity for English reading ability, there was nevertheless a feeling that learning in a second language can hinder students progress and inhibit their ability to express themselves. Below are some comments that have been extracted from interviews with the teachers and which reflect teachers views on English language instruction.

Table : 4.10

Title : Challenges of Instruction in English

Comments from Teachers	Out of 10 Teachers
The curriculum demands an English proficiency level students have not yet achieved.	8
Performing Arts should be taught in an environment where all students feel free to express themselves, experiment with ideas and explore thoughts and feelings.	7
Because students cannot participate in high grade-level instruction, modifications are necessary to meet their linguistic and cognitive levels, which can have a knock-on effect on the success of the quality education the students receive.	7
It is sometimes difficult to identify if a student is unfamiliar with the content material or is in fact unable to demonstrate understanding because of language barriers.	6

Notwithstanding the above points, it was agreed by all teachers that English fluency is necessary by the time students reach their graduating year. In the Questionnaire, 60% of students claimed that their English abilities did not inhibit their learning process, but as Collier [1992] and Cummins [1994] indicate, *"it may take five to seven years to acquire the level of proficiency needed for understanding the language in its academic uses."* p.26. Of course for some students this is possible, whilst for others their oral presentations and written assignments do not reach degree standard. *"Their degree thesis may be very thin and whilst they may have reached academic fluency, it is clear that their written English is blinding their thought process,"* said one teacher lecturer of English. Other teachers

went on to explain how students hand in drafts and they [teachers] end up correcting spelling and grammatical errors, which can change the subtle meaning.

For the students the process is clearly confusing. However, it seems that the advantages of learning in English out-way the disadvantages. The majority of teachers and students identify English language instruction as the key to opening the door to higher education and future employment and thus is the way to go. The table below summarizes the response given by both students and staff.

Table : 4.11

Title : Medium of Instruction

SUGGESTED LANGUAGE AS THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION					
ENGLISH		CANTONESE		UNCLEAR	
Staff	Students	Staff	Students	Staff	Students
78%	70%	20%	20%	2%	10%

The popularity of English instruction was not surprising. The discussion then must be how best to help support this process. Students were asked a number of questions to ascertain if they were seeking every advantage of improving their English language ability. It is clear from the results as shown in table 4.12 below that they need to read more in English, see more English movies and use the English language more frequently.

Table : 4.12

Title : Language Frequencies

3 = frequent, 1 = less frequent

Situation	Cantonese	English	Putonghua
At school during class time	2	3	1
At school out of class time	3	1	2
With family	3	1	2
With friends	3	1	2
With neighbours	3	1	2
Reading newspapers	3	2	1
Other leisure reading	3	2	1
TV	3	2	1
Cinema	3	2	1
Performing Arts	2	3	1
Personal correspondence	3	2	1
Shopping	3	1	2
Popular music	3	2	1
TOTAL	37	20	12

Adapted from Wright and Kelly-Holmes (1997) table on Language choices

Whilst infrequent use of English could be viewed as a disadvantage to the students' language training, watching television, going to the movies and talking with friends and family about performing arts in their native language can also be seen as positive support for their education. Notwithstanding this viewpoint, ideas on how to facilitate the learning of English language need to be implemented. During

the interviews students were asked to give verbal responses to some open-ended questions from the interviewer to find ways of facilitating learning.   At the end of the discussion ten students were asked to make a list of suggestions for teachers to help facilitate content learning.   What follows is a summary of those suggestions ranked in order of popularity.

Table : 4.13

Title : Content Delivery

Comments from Students	Out of 10 students
Handouts in both English and Chinese to help students follow the lecture presentation.	9
All major topics to be written on the whiteboard.	9
Written instructions to support all verbal instructions.	8
Approve the use of tape recorders during lectures.	8
Provide a glossary of new words for each lesson.	7
Clear and legible writing	6
Major study classrooms should provide an informal environment for English language development to take place along-side major instruction.	6
Do not use colloquial language during lectures.	6
Speak slowly and clearly.	6
Set up some English study groups.	4

4.9   TEACHER'S APPROACHES TO TEACHING.

Relatively few of The Academy students are in the top 10% or 20% of all Hong Kong students and are not generally known as 'high flyers'.   [see table below for entry qualifications of 2004 cohort]

Table : 4.14

Title : Academic Qualifications of Students Admitted.

Qualifications	Entry Qualifications of 2004 Cohort
HK Certificate of Education (HKCEE) (more than 5 passes)	9%
HK Certificate of Education (HKCEE) (5 passes)	85%
General Certificate of Education (3 passes)	3%
HK Certificate of Higher Education (HKCAL) (more than 2 passes)	3%

It was accepted amongst the teachers that the type of learning that needs to take place should be aimed at a vocational training with an academic edge. Indeed the teachers all seemed to emphasize practical work rather than academic to foster an independent and questioning approach, advocating strong motivational skills and critical thinking. 72% of the teachers interviewed claimed that they preferred their classes to involve a high degree of learner activity and interaction, a situation that 65% of these teachers commented was not being realized.

During the observation sessions a difference in style between the local teachers and those of the overseas teachers was noted. It was observed how the local teachers, [and this included those teachers who had studied and worked overseas] drove the learning process, like *"gurus transferring their personal wisdom"* – Dimmock [1995 p.369]. They emphasized discipline and encouraged their students to accept instruction with little questioning. However, in those classes conducted by overseas teachers, student participation was visibly encouraged as teachers tried to conduct classes with an interactive approach to give students the opportunity to express and share their own ideas. This approach was not always successfully implemented and students appeared to be reluctant to speak out or express their opinions on an individual level. They appeared reluctant to experiment and generally demonstrated a rather narrow 'comfort zone' that they seemed unwilling to step out of. It seemed that they were being pushed into activities that were geared to a particular style of learning that they were uncomfortable with, resulting in a mismatch between the explicit learning styles and assumptions about learning styles as described by Honey & Mumford [1986. p. 21].

Despite teachers' efforts to encourage independency, most students appeared to rely on the teacher and not give themselves the chance to explore new ways or ideas of approaching issues and problems. This situation usually in the end resulted in the teacher turning to a more formal approach of 'chalk and talk'. Sotto [1994] raised the concern that when the teacher is the only active member in the room, the idea that the teacher is the master is reinforced. He warns that this discourages a line of communication to anybody other than from teacher to student and encourages passivity in the student. Even though classes were small, sometimes only 5-15 students, a lack of student participation, cohesion and sense of teamwork was noted.

Throughout the observation sessions a collection of teaching methodologies on the part of individual teachers in both practical and theoretical sessions was noted. Honey & Mumford (1986, p.21) point out concerns relating to such an approach. They say that some learning opportunities that adopt multifarious teaching styles may only benefit those students that can adapt to different styles, others may find it difficult to deal with multifarious approaches. On the other hand, there are learning opportunities that may be dominated by one learning style but which are likely to be successful only those students that relate to that specific styles. p.21

It was noted how some of the Academy teachers experimented with different approaches and some tried basing their classes on a fostering and cajoling environment. One teacher took a *'let's learn together'* approach, while others tended to teach in a very slow and laborious manner at times to make sure the basic and core knowledge was understood, especially in the lower divisions. However, what was particularly evident was that whilst teachers did make an effort to reach out to the students, they

nevertheless tended to work on the assumption that they had been employed because of who they are and what they have to offer in terms of their own professional experience and expertise. When questioned about the appropriateness of their teaching methodologies and their assumption of the students' learning, there appeared an apparent rigidity to use teaching methods according to their own established habits and cultural framework. An observation that was demonstrated by 77% of the Western teachers who, when encountering a problem with students, explained that whilst they tried to consider Chinese cultural issues, they nonetheless ultimately defined the problem in terms of their own Western norms. The local teachers on the other hand confirmed that when encountering a problem with students, they defined the problem in terms of only Chinese cultural norms. This was interesting since teachers said they had researched Western culture and six out of seven had completed higher education in the West. J.A. Lee [1966] described the unconscious reference to one's own cultural values as the *"Self Reference Criterion"*, referring to the observation of others from a teacher's point of view and comparing students with ourselves as "normal". This, he points out, could result in the obvious danger of being tied to one's own point of view, like *"using their own experiences and their own concepts of what is correct behaviour as the standards for judging the behaviour of others"*, as also explained by Triandis and Brislin [1983, p.ix]

90% of Western teachers, compared to 71% of local teachers attested to being 'comfortable' with diversity and considered they had the ability to deal effectively with different communication styles. Yet of 90% of the Western teachers, only 62% said that they were able to enter into meaningful dialogue with their students compared to 95% of local teachers. This does not correlate with the students' response that says 36% enter into meaningful dialogue with the teachers.

Further ambiguities also highlighted overseas teachers who had enrolled to learn the Cantonese language; none had actually proceeded past beginner's level. As much research on language competencies explains, language and cultural understanding go hand in hand. Carrasquillo & Rodriguez [1995] emphasize *"language and content are intricately intertwined……."* .p.31. It became evident during all of the various methods of research that the teachers generally failed to address the cultural differences that exist and did not seem to be aware of their own ethnocentrism. When the teachers' cultural values and educational and teaching philosophy were questioned, it was found that none of the overseas teachers had researched the Hong Kong secondary education system and only 6% had done any research on the Hong Kong secondary education system since arriving.

In discussing personal approaches to teaching, the lecturer in Civilizations commented – *"I assume that the students in my class are there because they are interested and motivated and want to learn and that they respect the material, the learning process, their classmates, and the teacher."* The lecturer of Period Styles commented, *"I assume that, dependent on which level and which stream they are in, they*

will have different preparations for the task of learning." As a senior lecturer in Applied Arts went on, *"the majority have at least a 6ᵗʰ form education so I try to treat them as adults. Yet whilst they tend to be older in age than the equivalent starters in the West, they know very little about theatre arts and so I like to begin at the beginning, explain terminology processes, etc. I find I have to repeat myself and find alternative ways of explaining concepts."* The Head of Props mentioned how he *"made the assumption that students are inclined to assemble formulae that they can repeat as a means of success, but as often as not this assumption is confounded by many who see formulae as counterproductive.* The Fine Arts lecturer explained how in reality the students are inclined not to be very inquisitive and are unwilling to challenge assumptions, conventions and presumptions. *"I find that I am not able to prepare materials that allow for a more freewheeling approach with open-ended aims, as one would assume to be the requirement of performing arts education, but rather my approach has to be reined in somewhat."* Explaining her frustrations, the lecturer in Applied Design spoke out, *"I feel like I am feeding information instead of teaching, and, if it's something that they've learnt before, then they stick with it and won't combine information. They are not open to new information or suggestions."*

Of the ten class sessions observed, three were arranged in an oval with the teacher sitting at the head and three were arranged in a semi-circular format with the teacher taking his/her position in the circle together with the students. On all of these occasions there was in actual fact little evidence of students being any more pro-active than when they were positioned in rows as they were in the remaining four classes. The classrooms at The Academy tend to be long and narrow and arranging circular seating to encourage interaction and participation is difficult. The venues tend to assume a situation of 'performance' from the teacher resulting in expectations from the students that they be "entertained" by the teachers.

In answer to the question 'what frustrates you most when teaching your students?', 67% of the lecturers commented on students' punctuality and tardiness. Good time management was also regularly mentioned during the interview sessions as an important concern and an area of frustration. The students' lack of knowledge in the arts was also mentioned. However, 33% of the teachers said this was actually a plus in that it allows them to start at the beginning and have full control of information. This approach paid off by the time students progressed to the upper levels, by which time, it seemed that the assumptions had gone and there was more open dialogue, more fluid exchange of ideas; and better work.

On the whole the teachers were critical about the students' passivity and lack of assertiveness and participation in class activities and discussions, situations that were observed in all the class sessions. It was noted how the Western staff tried to give students more responsibilities to encourage their self-confidence, but despite the belief in student autonomy, all teachers in actual fact seemed to end up 'in

charge' and generally responsible for the learning outcome, thus reinforcing the sense of dependency that Sotto [1994] refers to.

It was apparent amongst the Western staff how, as educators and theatre practitioners, they felt inhibited and generally unable to criticise openly. As one Western teacher pointed out, *"Criticism, particularly, in an open forum, is deemed sensitive and this makes the approach to discovery and experimentation in performing arts subjects difficult."* Either that or generally the Western and Eastern aesthetics are very different and no one wants to go there. This means that there are, as one member of staff, a lecturer in Scenic Art, described, *"thousands of years of Asian and Western history which we are not tapping into; instead we are cobbling together amalgams of both."*

4.l0 STUDENT'S COMMENTS ON TEACHING METHODOLOGIES.

Students feel that they are rarely referred to or listened to in matters concerning their education at The Academy. In response to questions about teaching methodology, the students criticized teachers for not giving them enough guidance. *"They give us only the title of the topic and expect us to locate the relevant references ourselves. We cannot be expected to read the whole book in one week to prepare for a single tutorial."* BFA 2 student. It was noted however, that some teachers do specify the relevant pages or chapters of readings and this encourages those who wish to prepare.

The students also commented that lectures tend to be dominated by what they called as "teacher talk". This they sai is not useful to their understanding, particularly when teachers simply read from textbook or notes. Students do prefer lectures where good use is made of concrete, real-life examples, diagrams, pictures and other visual materials that illustrate theories. They like to have theories explained by examples. It was also noted that they like to be told the relationship between topics and subjects. Some of the concerns expressed by the BFA 3 year level students are highlighted below:

Table : 4.15

Title : Comments on Teaching Approaches

Comments from Students	Out of 10 students
We learn lots of different things, but fail to see how they fit together.	80
Inadequate time to meet, discuss and co-ordinate our work.	70
Teachers have little consideration of other subjects, resulting in work overload, and clashes	60
We don't want to be given information from books – we can get that from the library	40
Some teachers who just stand and talk are very boring	40

Generally the students did have some positive feedback on the tutorials and seminars but most wanted a better working relationship where teachers would provide opportunity for interaction and discussion in small group encounters. This, they pointed out, would bring closer relationships between teachers

and students and lead to better understanding, as they would be more prepared to interact and ask questions right away.

4.11   STUDENTS APPROACHES TO LEARNING.

As we note from Biggs [1996a] the prerequisite to learn the Chinese writing system calls for much emphasis on memorization in the early years. Whilst this does not necessarily mean that Chinese learners are predisposed to surface learning, it must nevertheless be noted that their way of learning varies as a result of this early learning requirement. In addition the emphasis on examinations in the early years has led students to develop certain 'memorizing' strategies, which also effect how they seek out clues, find meanings, and adapt their learning to succeed. It seems that by making use of a teacher's clearly defined and selective instruction, students first try to memorize it for easy recall. This approach allows them to deal with cultural values and to cope with second language instruction.

It is clear from the observation sessions that independent learning is not something that the students have been encouraged to do in secondary school. Upon reaching higher-level education it becomes particularly difficult for them to quickly adopt independent learning strategies. Little thought has been given to the learning expectations, and generally students appear uncomfortable when they realize that they are expected to take responsibility for their own education assuming that their teachers (the experts) will pour knowledge into their heads just as they experienced in secondary school. When they realize that there is not always a clear right or wrong answer to a question, they seem puzzled and then they are further perplexed when they see that the objective of their education is to ask the right questions rather than to find the right answers. There is no evidence of self-directed learning or indeed indication of a learning shift from one of subject-centredness to one of problem-centredness.
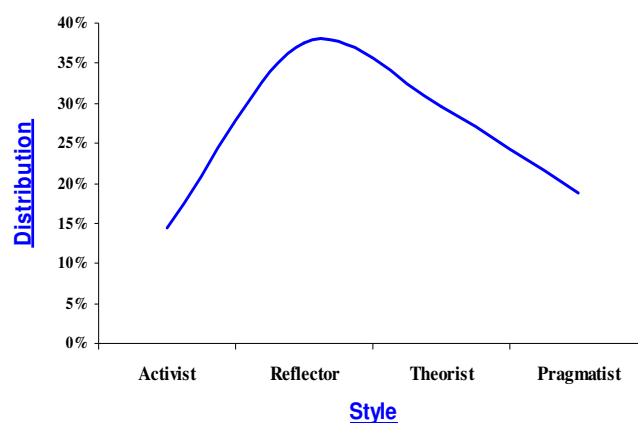
Generally students entering The Academy have to foster an unspoken preference about how to learn. It is clear from the data gathered by the Honey & Mumford Questionnaires [see Appendix 1] that they approach their work systematically and like connection between ideas and circumstances. They only appear comfortable when they can see relevance from what they are learning. They like clear guidelines that save time and have apparent practical benefits. They do not like to be given options or substitutes, favouring a model with plenty of examples so that they can imitate it, comfortably imitating a superior or someone with a proven reputation. They do not like to go round in circles. They like to apply short cuts and see progress by happily applying techniques that show obvious practical advantages to saving time. They need help in diagnosing their learning methods and encouragement to initiative their own learning objectives. They need support in identifying resources and encouragement in critical analysis and valuing process. They need to understand that there is not always a clear right or wrong answer to a question and that the objective of their education is to ask the

right questions rather than to find the right answers. They need to know that their teachers are there to facilitate learning rather than pouring knowledge directly into their heads

Students' preferred approaches to learning bear a strong correlation with those of Reflectors/Theorists as described by Honey & Mumford, [1992]. Based on the questionnaire with a sample size of 50, the Distribution curve shows:

Fig : 4.6

Title : Students' Learning Styles

Activist	Reflector	Theorist	Pragmatist
14%	37%	29%	19%

What this means is that the teachers have tendencies more like those of an Activist/Pragmatist, something that was also identified in the classroom sessions and confirmed by the questionnaires. In contrast to the students' performance, data collected in regard to teachers' expectations of students' performances show a "reverse bell-curve". Based on the questionnaire with a sample size of 26 collected, the distribution shows as follows:

Fig : 4.7

Title : Teachers' Understanding of Students' Learning Styles

Activist	Reflector	Theorist	Pragmatist
30%	18%	18%	34%

Our concern here is to establish an understanding of the difference between a learning activity that is predicted by the teacher and one that is effective for the student. As Honey and Mumford, [1982] point out:

> *"….some individuals are heavily dominated by one learning style, or are particularly weak in one style, so some learning activities are dominated by explicit or implicit assumptions about learning styles. The activity may be so geared to a particular style of learning as to cause a mismatch with any participant whose own major preferences are different."* p.21

What we see is that the Hong Kong students' learning styles are heavily reliant on the teacher, with minimal control by the learner. Students need encouragement to make use of their personal reservoir of experiences as a resource for learning so that they can ultimately diagnose their own learning needs and carry out their personal learning plans. See list below for student's comments in this respect. See also Appendix 4 for additional data relating to Teachers' Expectations of students' learning styles.

Table : 4.16

Title : Learning Experiences

Comments from Students	Out of 10 students
It is difficult to adjust. I find myself swimming alone in a big harbour and nobody is helping. I have to support myself or I will drown.	8
It is harder than secondary school. Much more reading and personal assignments are required	9
I usually don't know how to begin a project. The teacher demonstrates many different ways to reach the end and I get very confused.	9
I felt lost at the beginning	8
We have to develop our own outlook as the teachers often have different ways. It is difficult to know whether we should follow one of them or try to develop a new approach ourselves.	8
Not sure such an independent learning process is suitable for us.	8
The teachers have many different approaches. Some give us detailed information and others tell us to explore for ourselves.	7
It is not what I expected.	7
The teachers often just tell us a topic and let us explore it. I find this very demanding and I worry I cannot make it.	7
Often I feel I don't know what the teacher is trying to teach. I get lost in class.	6

The comments listed above clearly identify students' difficulties in adapting to the curriculum and teaching approach. Whilst they may acknowledge that they need to adopt a more learner orientated approach with a higher degree of freedom and autonomy, one that is less reliant on the teachers and significantly more independent, it is nevertheless clear that they need support to confront the anxiety that accompanies such a transition.

4.11.1   Ability to Think Independently

During class activities run by local Chinese teachers, the students appeared to be relaxed and comfortable with the teacher-student relationship and the teaching methodology. However, during class activities run by non-Chinese teachers, the students appeared apprehensive and inhibited. These inhibitions result in a lack of confidence and independence. '*Students are obedient and hard working but lack confidence and independence, which has an effect on their self-motivation*', said a lecturer in Design Methodology. These attitudes make the process very teacher-led and it was noted that much time is spent trying to encourage students to be more outspoken about their opinions and feelings. *"I am trying to establish a friendly, informal approach as fellow colleagues working in the theatre rather than a 'top down' traditional teacher-and-student approach, in order to create a harmonious atmosphere and thus build on confidence. This is difficult,"* the teacher went on to explain.

For most students the need to think independently is complex and demanding and is seen to create problems. Students are expected to develop ability in critical thinking and seek knowledge on their own. It is no longer accepted that they be passive recipients of information. A lecturer in Costume Design pointed out, *"As adults in a performing arts institution, the weight of learning should be on their shoulders. They should be proactive not reactive, but they have never been given the opportunity to take responsibility for their own education, and it is difficult for them to adapt"*. The following comments account for more than 65% of students' responses.

Table : 4.17

Title : Independent Learning

Comments from Students	Out of 10 students
I often find it difficult to follow and to study on my own.	8
We have to learn and think independently	8
We have to show an active role or otherwise we might miss things	8
We have to look at things from different ways. In secondary school there was always a model answer. We find this very difficult.	8
Time management is difficult for us to learn how to adapt.	8
We need to deal with our own problems; no one is available to do it with us.	7
We have to make choices and make priorities. That is difficult for us.	7
No one takes care as they do in secondary school.	7
We are expected to schedule our own time to finish our projects.	6
In secondary school the teacher handed out everything we needed to learn. Now we have to search for ourselves	6
We are asked to think and analyze things by ourselves and this is difficult.	6
We have to show self-initiative. This is quite difficult for us.	5

BFA 1 students

It became clear from the above responses how reluctant students are to question or discuss issues. It was surprising, therefore, that when asked, 64% of the students claimed that they preferred their classes to be 'student-driven' rather than 'teacher-driven'. This was a surprising result, which does not concur with their comments listed above, but is perhaps a response that stems from what they believe to be an appropriate learning style, a style that they prefer to experience. Notwithstanding these aspirations a number of difficulties and challenges were reported as students tried to adapt to the style of education that is required of them at The Academy, particularly in the first year.

For some students, however, it was noted that they were able to make the jump and adopt independent learning skills by the time they reached the higher levels.

Fig : 4.18

Title : Adjusting to the Learning Requirements

Comments from Students	Out of 10 students
At first I did not have any sense of belonging and feel vulnerable. Now I understand all the departments and do not feel a stranger anymore. I have freedom to choose some subjects as apposed to the rigid timetable in secondary school, where I had to study subjects that I didn't like.	7
We learn more in small groups and can benefit from each other's views.	7
I like that there is no pressure from public examinations.	6
The teachers at The Academy are very friendly and we do not have to show respect like in secondary school.	6
Before I studied to meet the expectations of my parents and teachers. Now I study for my career and myself.	6
I feel that this is the beginning of a new life. I now know how I am to plan for my future.	5
I like that I get much more freedom from school authorities.	5
I enjoy being able to decide how to spend my own time.	4
I have never had as enjoyable time as a student before.	4

BFA 3 students

Comments from these students were particularly encouraging but it must be noted they were small in numbers [approximately 30%] and they were all comments from students in their final year of training.

4.11.2   Students' Ability to Take Charge of their Own Learning

It is apparent that most students still focus on a traditional pedagogical approach to their learning and they need to be pushed away from that comfort zone to more self-directed learning, said a Senior Lecturer, Design Skills. As another teacher commented during the interview process, '*Leading them to trust their own imagination and intellect is difficult – it is a slow, step-by-step process. It takes more than two years for them to begin to find some independence of thought and of working methodology.* One teacher suggested that students be encouraged to look at things mechanically. This, a teacher of Liberal Studies said, will *"enable them to look at work in ways that will help to develop them. It is best not to talk in an emotional or personal content, but in a narrative content, to enable them to feel more comfortable"*.

Classes where students appear inquisitive, talkative and willing to challenge assumptions were not found. However, in practical classes where the students shared in the responsibility of the class direction, they were able to make critiques of each other, of the material, and of themselves. It was also clear that teamwork in some classes where teams take responsibility for conducting learning was also positive.

4.11.3   Approach to Memorization

Asian students are often reported to rely heavily on surface-level processes such as rote learning and memorization. Indeed as we have seen, Hong Kong students are used to memorizing a lot of material. Many teachers pointed out that students regard *'teacher's notes as model answers'*, an acceptance that results in a passive approach to learning, when they seldom ask questions or dare to challenge the teacher's point of view. As the teachers pointed out, they want *'written notes to memorize rather than concentrating on learning for the moment and they are accustomed to structured and passive learning conditions which results in a cultural acceptance whereby they seldom reveal opinions or express their capabilities.'* As Biggs [1996] explains, this does not necessarily mean that they are disposed to surface learning only. Their approach to learning is one that varies as a function of the learning environment where they seek cues, make meaning, and adapt their learning to succeed. Yes, Chinese learners learn repetitively, but as Watkins & Biggs [1996] point out, this is both to ensure retention and to enhance understanding as a result of the specific requirements of the Chinese writing system, which calls for more emphasis on memorization at a young age, and not least because of the emphasis on examinations. As noted throughout the research, this leads the students to use certain strategies to deal with the perceived requirements of the curriculum. Watkins and Biggs [1996] identify these as *'surface, deep and achieving'*. They explain a misconception in the belief that Confucius Heritage Culture learners are rote learners and claim this thinking results in a situation where *"Chinese Learners are commonly misunderstood by Westerners"* p.3.

4.11.4   Communication skills

The Academy students lack ownership of their own learning and find any sense of autonomy difficult. It is hard for them to communicate in class and/or to ask or answer questions of the teacher. Classes were observed where students experienced difficulty in asking or responding to questions. The table below identifies students' concerns:

Table : 4.19

Title : Question Answering

Comments from Students			Out of 10 students
How often do you ask or answer questions in class	16% Often	36% Occasionally	48% V Occasionally

We need to understand so much material. If we don't understand the fundamentals or the background knowledge, we should not be expected to answer or be asking questions.	8
I prefer the lecturer to call upon specific students to answer his question.	8
We might not ask questions because our English is not good enough. If we were allowed to respond in Cantonese, we may feel more comfortable." BFA 1 and 2.	8
If I volunteer to answer a teacher's question, other students may think I am showing off.	7
I don't want my classmates to laugh at what they may consider as easy questions.	7
Sometimes I don't really understand the tutor's questions.	6
I am afraid to answer a question in case I may give the wrong answer, causing the lecturer and fellow classmates to think me stupid.	6
If others understand the material, my question will be a waste time for my classmate's.	6

Only 16% of students implied that they felt comfortable when asked to express their opinion. Most said that if they have a question, they would rather ask the tutor in private for all the reasons stated above. They were nevertheless encouraged to volunteer responses and initiate discussions but it took a long time to achieve results. It was noted that when they did come forward, their responses tended to be quite impressive.

Academy students, unlike most performing arts students around the world, tend to have difficulty in responding to the informal teaching process that is typical of a performing arts Academy.   As a lecturer of Applied Arts pointed out, *"they seem to have particular difficulty when traditional quantitative processes are less emphasized and where self-motivation, self-analysis, and individual initiation in learning are foremost in the learning process of a given class."* For most Hong Kong students, scoring high marks is a metaphor for success, and tremendous effort is spent focusing on passing exams. Students have difficulty in seeing the value of process-orientated learning. Getting them to complete and hand in journals and/or diaries and even complete projects on time is particularly difficult. It was noted that they focus very much on goal orientated learning, and no matter how much teachers stress that learning is a continual process, for some subjects to students grades are just a medical check up to The Academy's well being and a way of monitoring individual students progress.

Nevertheless, students continue to focus the majority of their attention on those subjects that are graded by examinations.

	YES	NO
Would you prefer to be graded by examinations	64%	36%
Do you evaluate learning success in Performing Arts with high grades	24%	76%

As seen in Table 4.20 above, the response shows that 64% of students prefer to be graded by examinations rather than continual assessment. As they explained in an informal discussion they are comfortable with examinations and feel measuring in this way is fair. What was interesting though was the low response given to how they evaluated the effect that grades have on their learning accomplishment in performing arts.

One teacher, the Head of Design, explained the effect that grades can have on their progress:

> *"The amount of pressure being placed on scoring high marks completely hinders their flow of creativity, which in turn affects their overall performance and well being. Integration of mind, body and spirit should be implemented where a balance should be maintained."*

The nature of applied arts subjects encourages grading through continual assessment, and as the teachers expressed, in these subjects critical thinking and multiple approaches to learning are integral to the materials. Most teachers talked about how tertiary education demands a new culture that is completely different from students' previous learning and explained how they try to free the students from feeling the compulsion to assimilate and regurgitate packaged information. At the same time, teachers try to provide a cogent structure to students' learning. It was observed how one teacher uses a special method to equate performance with grading. He uses a plus [+] minus [-] and a zero [o] to rate their daily performance. The symbols are given numerical values and their accumulation renders a numerical grade. This is a very simple and direct solution that nevertheless does not give the extraordinary weight to one-time performance that their old exam culture did. Some students seemed to find this somehow appeases their grade mania yet gives them the freedom to occasionally do less well.

Some teachers said that the best strategy is to totally dismiss the old examination culture and instruct students to break away from this tradition. However, for the more traditional subjects and the high number of students who are less adaptable, an exam mentality still tends to predominate. One teacher reported how it is necessary to do additional work to move this latter group away from these less useful

models. It was observed that by the end of the 2nd year some students start to surmount the examination culture. Others, it was noted, continue to struggle during the entire time they are at The Academy.

4.11.5 Independent Exploration, Creative and Critical Thinking.

Of ten teachers interviewed, eight pointed out a 'stifling of creativity' in students when they enter The Academy. By nature, as noted throughout the research, Hong Kong students are not problem solvers as it is not part of their culture. Problems may force them to make decisions and use their own opinions, something that is not generally expected of them in secondary school. Students seem to be aware of this but have difficulty making the jump. One student summed up the intricacy of this hurdle when she said that she loved to *"try anything safe"*. The ambiguity is interesting! We are reminded here of Nevius' [1995] comments regarding the Hong Kong primary and secondary education system *'precluding all freedom of thought and originality'*, and indeed the lecturers at The Academy raised concerns that their students lack the freedom of play and show little confidence in motoring skills. *"They do not have the creativity that is generally expected of Applied Arts students around the world"* said a lecturer in Design.

4.11.6 Self-Motivation

Students who are self-motivated, individual and ambitious can be seen negatively by peers as negative. As a number of lecturers said, *"students would rather go with the flow"*. However, it can take four to five years before one can see improvement towards independent thinking. Yet what is interesting, is that students come to The Academy wanting to be artists. As one lecturer from the Scenic Art department pointed out:

> *"Although they say they have a passion, they find it very difficult to get motivated with assignments that have no clear cut guidelines, while for the more theoretical and examined subjects they spend hours and hours studying. We try to knock the exam mentality out of them while they are here by pushing and shoving and cajoling and fostering to try and get them to think independently, so it becomes second nature in a way the exams were previously. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't."*

Other lecturers agreed with this scenario and the Senior Lecturer in Props Construction commented, *"students need examinations to motivate them and as such it is necessary to include examinations in the syllabus. Other kinds of assessment don't prompt motivation"*. He went on to say, *"When it comes to my subject, I find it difficult to motivate them and I spend a lot of time doing things for them"*.

He compared them to courtroom lawyers:

> *"They weigh their options up to work out which teacher has the most weight in relation to the grades. They take up the maximum allowance of absences. They know the exact boundaries and they do only what they need to do to get through."*

A lecturer in Costume Making blamed the problem on self-preservation, to get them through the degree. She explained:

> *"The issue is the Grade Point Average [GPA] perception. The GPA system allows them to assume that they start with a 1st class honours degree and as long as they keep up by passing the necessary exams and gaining the necessary level of assessments, then every-thing else works down. If they keep up this average it must stifle motivation and in turn creativity, because they are not taking chances".*

It is clear that the majority of students find self-motivation difficult. They prefer to have information provided for them rather than research themselves. By the time they reach their graduation year, they have developed their technical skills, and also a higher level of responsibility was noticed. However, as the Head of Production pointed out:

> "*Whilst they are generally committed and reliable with good technical skills, they nevertheless lack self-motivation and the ability to respond to crisis. They also lack confidence, have difficulty in taking the initiative, have little ability in problem solving (particularly aesthetic problems) and are not assertive.*"

There are, however, those students who seem to adapt quite readily to the level of autonomy expected of them but in doing so appear to become lazier because there is no one to discipline them to the degree they were accustomed to in secondary school. They readily admit the difficulties:

Table : 4.21

Title : Difficulties Caused by Lack of Discipline

Comments from Students	Out of 10 students
I have become lazier because there is no direct pressure.	8
It is easy to become laid-back so that we don't really try hard enough.	7
We postpone doing the things we don't like until the last minute	7

BFA 3 students

4.11.7   Time Management Skills

During the interview process, students' time management skills were mentioned over and over again. One teacher commented, *"they study long but their time management is poor. It is a Mexican standoff where no one wants to leave before 12 pm regardless of how much work they have to do."* This lecturer in Stage Management went on to say *"I question how much is studying hard or looking like studying hard*."

The Head of Production Management pointed out:

> *"students improve their time management skills as they become more accustomed to working according to deadlines and are able to develop a better understanding of their own ability, although generally their awareness of deadlines does not improve to the level that they are able to take on the responsibilities expected of a student by graduation"*.

Students complained about the complexity of carrying out several projects at the same time and expressed difficulty in prioritizing, particularly when there is a clash of deadlines. They point out that they tend to put things off, dragging their feet until the very last minute when they then tend to experience a great deal of stress and feelings of guilt and irresponsibility if they are unable to produce work to show to their teacher.

Table : 4.22

Title : Students Difficulty in Multi-Tasking

Comments from Students	Out of 10 students
When we are working on a project our minds will be preoccupied.	8
I can't help but put things off until the deadline because of other projects.	8
It is hard to study subjects and work on a production simultaneously, particularly if we have to revise other subjects.	7
I prefer a project to last for a shorter period of time.	6
I feel guilt and irresponsibility if I cannot produce something to show to my tutor.	5

4.11.8   Problem Based Learning

"Our students are not problem solvers. It is not part of their culture but problems force them to make decisions and use your own opinions." The Head of Design explained:

The Academy production assignments give the students the opportunity to work in a realistic setting and students are encouraged to think about discrepancies between theory and practice by operating in an environment where they need to recognize the constraints under which they will operate in the industry.

Table : 4.23

Title : Perception of Production Projects

Comments from Students	Out of 10 students
Production projects make it easier for us to learn by ourselves, from life experiences rather than from books	7
We learn how to get along with people and know more about inter-personal relations, things that are important to our future careers."	6
When we work in a group, others can correct or give advice about our mistakes.	5
We can combine different pieces of work into one and learn from each other by accepting others' opinions and different ideas.	6

However, students expressed a variety of difficulties:

Table : 4.24

Title : Student Challenges in Production Projects

Comments from Students	Out of 10 students
Some lecturers think that we are knowledgeable. They may suggest doing the project in this way or that but I may not know how to make use of that particular knowledge. I cannot understand well what the supervisor suggests to me, but I think it is not good to keep asking.	7
Lecturers should be available to continually discuss our work with us, not just at the commencement of the assignment. Supervision should be on-going for consultation and to give feedback on progress.	8
Lecturers need to understand the process from students' perspectives.	7
Lecturers need to be realistic about the size of an assignment and how many other projects we have to do with at the same time. They should coordinate across subjects.	8
It can be difficult to find time for us students to come together to talk about our work. Often we have different study schedules.	7

There were a variety of difficulties raised about solving problems during production projects, but in most cases students appeared to be looking for short cuts and ways to avoid conflict. For these reasons nearly all students emphasized the importance of good group partners. In most cases students appeared

reluctant to take on responsibilities without approval from the teachers. There was also a strong consensus as to how students value a supervisor and the supervision process.

Table : 4.25

Title : Problem Solving through Production Process

Comments from Students	Out of 10 students
We prefer to work in teams with students that we know already so that we can more easily relate to each other and understand our feelings and beliefs.	8
If all students are of similar character and adopt the same direction and approach, then the group will be efficient and effective and can easily reach consensus.	8
If we have similar styles, this helps to identify each other's strengths and we can easily divide the jobs and responsibilities. Then when conflict arise we can make compromises quickly.	7
We should not be allowed to search aimlessly ourselves as this is a waste of time and is frustrating.	7
Sub-groups or cliques can form when we are not familiar with each other and each other's different ideas. These groups can very seriously undermine team spirit and jeopardize the completion of a project.	6

For their part, the teachers were rather critical in regard to the way students handled projects. They also shared concerns regarding students' attitudes. The points listed below are those that were expressed repeatedly.

Table : 4.26

Title : Teachers' Perception of Students' learning

Comments from Teachers	Out of 10 teachers
Students find it difficult to concentrate and learn from the process rather than all the time concerning themselves with the finished product.	9
Students tend to be familiar with a body of rules and principles in that they are able to study books and memorize the theory, (whether they remember it after they have finished the examinations is arguable). However, they lack confidence in a practical real life production situation.	8
They find it difficult to brainstorm and are reluctant to experiment all the time, preferring to be given directions.	8
During the production process they may have to take part in certain activities that involve interacting with students they may not like. In these situations, they are not good at cooperating.	7
When students are grouped together but don't share the same views and expectations, they find it difficult to collaborate. It is then that they want the lecturer to guide them more closely and monitor them thoroughly.	6
Some students may not have ideas and wait for others' opinions,	5
Some students may not want to put much effort into the project. They just want to pass and get the degree. This makes it very difficult in a team effort.	4

Some students felt that the assignments help them to develop presentation skills, encourage communication and self-confidence and build on a systematic approach. Whilst it was noted that these

benefits were not expressed across the board, it does nevertheless seem that the not so positive comments outweighed the positive comments. It was generally noted how students do eventually adapt to this style of learning. The acquisition of new knowledge and skills after working on The Academy's production assignments have in some cases lead to changes in their values and attitudes towards learning.

4.12   TEACHERS EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS' LEARNING

Blyth [1988, p.1] discusses the importance of teachers finding a way to respond to their students learning styles.   Whilst he emphasises the difficulty in predicting how students respond to and interpret experiences and how they seek out new knowledge and practice skills, he nevertheless stresses the importance of understanding their background and how their learning styles are influenced by prior learning and experiences so that teachers can respond appropriately.

Students at The Academy are expected to deal with drama crisis, with things that change and a range of diverse activities. They are expected to have a high visibility, chair meetings, lead discussions and give presentations. They are expected to solve problems and generate ideas without constraint of policy or structure. They are expected to do a thorough job, attend to detail, dot the I's and cross the T's. These practices, as we have noted, do not depict Hong Kong students' approach to learning.

During the observation sessions a pragmatic approach was noted by many of the teachers. Classes were structured in a particularly competitive way and students were expected to be actively involved. When questioned about this, a lecturer in Design Methodology commented that he felt his students react better to fierceness. "*Those of us who are dictatorial have more of a chance of getting work handed in*", he pointed out.   A Senior Lecturer of Theatre Design explained how he got students to present in front of the class:

> "*In all of my creative design classes, I expect and encourage presentations, discussions, questions and answers and I discourage too much formality. I need the group to be focused. I expect them to be vocal even from Diploma 2, and I question them. I teach them the techniques of presentation, but it is difficult for them to explain their work. What is their concept? Why this pallet? I try to get them to think as adults and push them to articulate and present clearly. They have to be broken in, they have to suffer, they have to get up in front of their peers, they need to get over their nerves and they have to learn to talk.*"

In this particular class, deadly silences were observed. Sometimes the lecturer would prod and he rarely let them off the hook. He did not let them have sub group discussions. They were encouraged

to learn from each other in the classroom and they all had to 'give'. His attitude was for them to train themselves, deal with their emotions and always through a second language. This same lecturer expressed his confidence in the students potential:

"On the whole the Hong Kong students tend to be far more imaginative and objective than the [one] American student in the class, as they do not know what might be right or wrong, and they do not have an understanding of what is good or bad in the arts. They do not have the inhibitions of the American student. They do not need to feel 'cool' so their script analysis is far more incisive [and in a foreign language). Despite the fact they live in a big city they have innocence; they haven't been brutalized by society. Music is mild compared to western music influences. They are naturally conservative in nature. Whilst it is not possible to banter with them on the same level as students in the United States, there are, despite culture peculiarities, some parallels."

4.12.1   Independent Thinking

It is apparent that the expectations set by The Academy dominates the teachers' thinking as they strive to get students to break away from the highly disciplined and rigid structure that they have been accustomed to in secondary school. For some these expectations are beyond reach. A lecturer in Applied Design explained his perception of the problem:

"Once they step out of that structure and are given the opportunity far more freedom and choice, the discipline seems to fall apart and they are unable to take responsibility for themselves. They are not used to 'free' thinking and do not have an aptitude for experimentation. What seems important is that they follow the rules, but not why they follow the rules."

By the time students are promoted to the higher levels, they seem to understand better, are more flexible and are able to make some changes to their learning. However, a lot goes unnoticed because they do not question detail. They do things step by step alongside the teacher and then do exactly the same steps independently on Academy productions without considering adaptations. They do not consider the whole picture. *"In the West one would give them the whole picture first and then during the journey expect questions,* the Head of Costume commented, rather than the systematic approach to building a brick wall, as described by Sotto [1994, p.43].

4.12.2 Grading Practices

The teachers highlighted the fact that the students' secondary education experience creates a passive educational culture, which inevitably is driven by the desire to acquire enough information for the sole purpose of obtaining good grades. The resulting effect is that students find it difficult to adapt to a culture that encourages a learning situation where traditional quantitative grading processes are less emphasized and self-motivation, self-analysis, and individual initiation in learning are foremost in the learning process.

4.12.3   Independent Exploration, Creative & Critical Thinking

Many questions were raised by teachers regarding students' ability in creative and independent thought. Their comments echoed the remarks made by Ramsden [1988] regarding how they focus on short-term requirements with an ability to reproduce only fragments of information presented in textbooks. Of course a more holistic approach to learning needs time for adjustment. It was noted how much time and energy is spent by teachers trying to develop students' critical thinking skills. *"To achieve this it often takes a students to break down in tears before they understood the training philosophy."* However, as the Head of Design went on to explain: *"Once the students relax and realize that the teachers are trying to help them, then they breath again and it becomes less of an up-hill battle."* Most teachers agreed that the most difficult concept for the students to comprehend is that there might be more than one answer to any question or more than one way of doing something.

Asking questions and discussions for the older students [BFA 2/3] were noted to be limited, and with the less mature students, the teachers tended to be met with virtual silence.   The teachers seem to deal with this in different ways. Some answer for the students, and others do not. Some leave the questions hanging for as long as they can, particularly if they feel that the students must have an opinion.   One teacher used the pyramid system, starting with small group discussions and then gradually increasing the size of the groups until the whole class became involved. One teacher explained how he sets up classes so that students share in the responsibility of class direction:

> *"They make critiques of each other, of the materials, and of themselves. I make committee work a strong component of some classes where teams take responsibility for conducting learning and teaching. I do not encourage straying from the topic of the class, but occasionally allow this to happen as a strategy to contrast times of particularly narrow focus,"* said by a course leader of craft subjects.

The teacher went on to explain how he has critiques that are student lead as often as possible. *"At least that's the call"*, he said, *"where they analyze on different levels, technically, aesthetically, etc. In the lower divisions this is harder to achieve but by the upper levels there is more of a flow of discussion and ideas. Outside of the classroom I encourage students to come and discuss projects, ideas and issues with me whenever they arise. I will always give constructive criticism to any work that is presented to me."* The fine line here though is gauging what the student feels is constructive criticism or just criticism. As one teacher commented, it is a difficult call because the students are not readily open to change in the learning process. They appear satisfied with their previous learning habits and see no reason for modifications. In the tutorial sessions they expect the tutor to do the preparation. They are content to just sit and take notes.

4.13   QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE RESEARCH

A follow up questionnaire [see Appendix 3] aimed at encouraging the students to state their personal views on the overall research discussion. Its objective achieved a total of 40 completed questionnaires [a response rate of 80%]. Of the 40 respondents, 14 of them [35%] were in year one, another 12 [30%] were in year two, 12 of them [30%] were in year three and two of them [5%] in years four and five. This was considered a particularly high response and perhaps identifies students' eagerness to support the research.

The questionnaire revealed that the students generally felt comfortable to express their views and were able to speak freely and truthfully during the interview process without worrying too much about consequences. They also expressed enjoyment in their involvement in the research and did not feel intimidated by the presence of others when stating their views.

While the information above may not be proof of validity, it does nevertheless strongly suggest that students were honest and stated their views unreservedly in the discussions. This it seems was not only because they found the environment comfortable but also because the focus of the interviews was on students' opinions rather than a critical analysis of particular teachers or courses. They also commented that the informal and relaxed approach encouraged them to contribute freely in an on-going discussion.

There was unanimous agreement that the information gathered in the interview be made available to fellow students, teachers and upper management and most agreed that The Academy should hold more discussion sessions for students to express their feelings and concerns. They hoped that their views and opinions would contribute to improvements in teaching and learning at The Academy and for that reason alone they were motivated by the discussions. The friendly attitude and gentle prompting of the

interviewer made it easy for them to explain their thoughts in what they believed to be a friendly environment, although some suggested that more guidance before the interviews on the purpose and focus of the discussion would have been helpful. Only two students indicated that they had some reservations about the process and admitted that they had not been totally frank in their opinions. This, they said, was mainly because of concern for others' feelings and the fear of possible retaliation if their teachers learned of their opinions.

5. ANALYSIS, SYNTHESIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

By international standards there is no doubt that Hong Kong students are extremely motivated and place a high priority on academic learning. Furthermore parents expect high standards from their children's academic achievement. Indeed as Stevenson and Stigler [1994, p.126] point out: *"According to most Asian parents, the major goal of childhood and adolescence is to obtain a good education….."*, a way of life that is embraced by most students, who for their part make every effort to attain the goals expected of them. Hong Kong Chinese believe that any accomplishment is achieved through hard work rather than natural skill or talent with the belief that there is no limit to a person's ability as long they work hard.

However, despite their ability to work hard, it was evident throughout the observation sessions that the majority of students have difficulty coping with The Academy curriculum. At the time of entering The Academy, students have a limited and somewhat immature knowledge of Performing Arts in particular and the Arts in general. They are then presented with communication and teaching styles that are unfamiliar to them, requiring them to break away from a familiar and comfortable mode of learning, to a style of learning that requires them to learn with understanding and personal control over the process. It is a jump that manifests much difficulty.

5.1.1 The Academy's Educational & Cultural Objectives

In the Bachelor of Fine Arts submission to the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation, [1996] The Academy stated:

> *"The training programme will contribute to the development and improvement of both knowledge, practice, appreciation and accessibility of both Western and Asian performing arts among the people of Hong Kong. It will encourage excellence, innovation, creativity, independence and diversity by offering suitable opportunities for students to benefit from and share the creative and learning experiences that arise from different ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds"* p.63.

Whether The Academy has been successful in its objective and been able to implement an educational philosophy that promotes the individualistic environment that is required for a Performing Arts Education in Hong Kong is arguable. The idealism is demanding by any standards but it is clear

throughout the research that The Academy falls short of its objectives and more needs to be done to overcome the challenges faced by the students, the teachers and the institution as a whole.

It is clear throughout the investigation that both teachers and students tend to stick to their own cultural framework and demonstrate little evidence of learning from each other's different ethnic, social and cultural experiences and viewpoints. Research identifies how, when people come together from different cultural backgrounds, they tend to demonstrate a variety of cultural and philosophical approaches and ideologies yet automatically continue to adopt their own approach to teaching and learning. Indeed over and again it became clear that the teachers at The Academy do indeed interpret meaning and responses to particular situations in different ways from the students as well as each other, resulting in a confused educational process with a potentially damaging effect on the quality of education.

5.1.2   The Imported Curriculum

The Hong Kong education system, as we have noted, is based on the assumption, that monoculturalism, homogeneity and uniformity are somehow a necessary condition for overall viability of education. On the other hand, the imported curriculum presently offered at The Academy adopts an approach to learning that concentrates on equipping students in the mastery of concepts. It encourages imagination and demands an interest in the work being studied rather than simply following or repeating teachers' knowledge or what can be memorized from textbooks. The philosophy is based very much on Ramsden's theory that learning involves not just making sense of other people's understanding of a given situation, but having the ability and confidence to assemble one's own perception of the situation as well. [Ramsden 1988 p.59]

At The Academy, the freedom and encouragement to develop ownership of one's work is clearly evident. The curriculum does not encourage individuals who will fit into social roles; instead the philosophy is to try to find all ways to encourage students to think for themselves and find their individual path. The paradox here is that the Hong Kong students have not been given the opportunity in their primary and secondary education to develop character and personality. Whilst they have graduated as some of the top students in the world in school exit exams, they have not had the opportunity to develop their social life, participate in drama, music, visual arts, and other out-of-class activities considered by Western educators as a necessary requirement. Essentially in fact, Hong Kong students relate well to the example of role models, but as Parsons [2003] warns:

"When you get to understand an example well, you will have acquired suggestions, but not rules, for understanding another case, provided it is a similar one and that you recognize the similarities. p.12

This, as he goes on to explain is particularly true of art as it is, *"almost always over-determined by the context and can be interpreted from several points of view."* p.12

5.1.3   Teaching and Learning

What we see is that The Academy students are principally graduates of a mainstream education system that fosters a belief that all students strive to keep up with measured academic levels.   The system is restrictive in regards to encouraging a range of students' talents and can result in deprivation of early experimentation.   This discourages students from independent and critical thought where they are motivated by exams and driven by high scores.   They are fed information and are often considered to be lazy when it comes to 'learning' - preferring to be 'taught', resulting in limited 'time management skills'.   It is thought that this type of educational approach has stifled creativity and discouraged confidence and hinders motoring skills.   The outcome is a general lack of confidence and individuality on the part of the student and a narrow approach to learning, especially when transferred to performing arts education.

Throughout their secondary education students are given little, if any, practice in making decisions and submitting them to public scrutiny.   The system does not promote opinions (particularly if they are ones of discontent), and discourages students from taking individual initiative or departing from standard procedures without their superiors' approval.   Risk taking is not seen to be advantageous, and so they conform.   Throughout their education students look for social support, for guidance and achievement and prefer to mimic their superiors.   They prefer to work as a team rather than search for independence.   Stevenson and Stigler [1992] give many examples of this approach explaining how the *"collective ideal is routed in their culture."* p.17

For the Western teachers at The Academy it is clear that this approach to learning is difficult for them to deal with.   If they are to make a substantial contribution to learning they need to become aware of the circumstances surrounding this method of learning and understand why Hong Kong students learn in this way.   It is important to point out that while this learning approach is difficult to reconcile with Arts education [as prescribed by western curricula], it is by no means inferior and should not be discarded.   The teachers may want to consider Ho's perspective where in Hofstede [1980] he explains this "collective ideal" as an extension of the "Confucian ethic of filial piety" rather than a contradiction of an individual's welfare:

> *"Collectivism does not mean a negation of the individuals' well-being or interest; it is implicitly assumed that maintaining the group's well-being is the best guarantee for the individual"* p.216

This practice, as Hofstede goes on to say, is quite different from the Western concept of the individual-group relationship where the groups cannot prosper unless, and only after, the individuals themselves prosper and tends to oppose Western philosophies. The general expectation is for the individuals to sacrifice the *"smaller self"* in order to perfect the *"greater self"*. As we see, teachers generally describe the students as passive rote learners lacking in innovative and critical thinking. If this is a true assessment, why then do the teachers fail to acknowledge this disparity? Expecting students who have graduated from such a prescribed standardized education system to immediately adopt a new and foreign approach is surely presumptuous. Graduates of this system need to be familiarized with the imported educational expectations and allowed the chance to understand the opportunities that lay beyond it. They need support and guidance, particularly during the early years. They should be allowed to develop through a range of transition programmes rather than simply thrown in at the deep end, as is the existing practice, to swim and in some cases drown. This inevitably results in educational and psychological repercussions on the quality of education.

In some of the class activities run by local teachers, it was noted how students appeared relaxed with the teacher-student relationship and the teaching methodology. However, during class activities run by Western staff, the students appeared apprehensive, and a noticeable difference in the profiles of the cognitive abilities between the western teacher and those of the students was noted.

Scribner and Cole [1981] like Cushner [1990] and Wagner, [1981] remind us that cognitive and memory development is determined by the total pattern of a society and demands of the environment in which we grow up. This results in a person being good at doing the things that are important to them and that they have occasion to do often. If the idea is to change their pattern of learning, then the students must appreciate the benefits of the training programme offered and understand the relevance of putting more effort and initiative into autonomous learning. Students need to understand that what they can learn at The Academy really depends on how they can contribute to the learning experience, which means relinquishing previous learning strategies. A lecturer at The Academy sums up the challenges:

> *"The reason behind their difficulty in letting go and trying out new things is the fear of failure. Nothing of what they have done before seems to prepare them for training in Applied Arts"*.
> Head of Scenic Art.

In a similar way, the teachers also have a tendency to be trapped in an inflexible structure that resists adaptation to alternative approaches. Grounded in academic assumptions that are culturally bound the local teachers tend to reinforce the students' approaches to learning by resisting any effort to encourage curiosity and initiative. On the other hand the Western teachers resist any effort to recognize how students already think about certain phenomena. They are unable to appreciate students' understanding that education comes from instruction, rather than something which has an interactive and participatory role.

Teachers and students need to understand these different approaches and distinguish between what can be accepted and what can be rejected. This is significantly different from disagreeing with other viewpoints and forcing one's own beliefs as the single criterion of truth. Openness to each others' cultural and educational backgrounds would result in mutual learning experiences. If both teachers and students could develop ways of dealing with each other on a personal rather than a stereotypical level, through an appreciation of fundamental similarities as well as differences amongst each other, understanding and communication would be better enhanced. Sotto [1994, p.169] points out there is no wisdom in teaching if one doesn't have an understanding of how students learn. The proviso though as he goes on to say, is that having studied how people learn ways then need to be found that will address the students' characteristics and study techniques. The teachers need to understand and appreciate the students' learning styles. The students need to become mindful of different educational objectives and understand that their teachers behave as they do because they have different cultural ways of approaching things. Both teachers and students need to understand the personal value of each other's approaches to teaching and learning and interact with a better sense of personal participation. As Hofsted [1991] reminds us, the world is not culturally homogeneous. He points out that cultures are made up of apposing positions, 'individualism' versus 'collectivism', which can, as he explains, coexist as well as become accentuated, depending on the situation.

5.1.4   The Foreign Teacher.

The Hong Kong Chinese are brought up in a system where they expect their superior to make the rule, as well as the decisions, and also to make choices for them. They are very comfortable in abiding by orders, providing harmony is honoured. As Bond [1991, p.77] quotes Lin Yu-tang:

> *"The King shall be King and the subjects shall be subjects. Social harmony will be assured if a wise and benevolent leader makes decisions which loyal subordinates sincerely follow. This was the Confucian ideal of 'government by gentlemen."*

Another significant and relevant difference in the degree to which the tutors and the students process information is the unspoken recognition of how, in a learning situation, the foreign teacher knows how to apply his rationality to local problem solving [De Bettignies, 1980: 302-303]. Unfortunately, though, if he is not in tune with the local culture, then his wisdom may not be relevant. To help him to formulate appropriate teaching methodologies he needs to understand cultural opinions and expectations and be able to take advantage of the students' learning styles. As Trompenaars [1993], suggests, he needs to *"carefully unpeel the onion to disclose the layers of cultural values and norms"*.

5.1.5 Facilitating learning

Upon entering tertiary education it is important that students understand that performing arts training demands an approach that is completely different from any of their previous learning. It is an educational process that is more about experimentation, problem solving and innovative thought. It is not the orderly approach to learning that students are accustomed to and they need to equip themselves with the capability for reasoning, problem solving and creative thought. The Academy teachers identified all of these areas as major requirements before effective learning in performing arts subjects can take place. Effective learning they commented, can only take place when learners take the initiative to seek out knowledge and experiment with new ideas and thoughts, a process that appeared difficult for the Hong Kong students. A simple and direct solution might also be to dismiss the exam culture to absolve them from feeling the compulsion to assimilate and regurgitate packaged information. However, bearing in mind the students' desires to measure progress, it might be more appropriate to offer a cogent structure to their learning which equates performance with grading, and therefore success, at the junior levels. This should have the objective of easing them away from the exam mentality slowly. It might also help to set up learning partners for the students to talk with to encourage them to share opinions and research ideas so that they can gain confidence to participate in open discussions.

5.2 ANDRAGOGICAL APPROACH

In analyzing andragogy we can follow Knowles' model which is built on the five mentioned critical hypothesis and which define the characteristics of learners at The Academy:

5.2.1 **Self-concept:** [Described by Knowles as moving from being dependent towards being a self-directed human being].

Throughout the research it was continually noted how The Academy students have difficulty moving away from being dependent towards being the self-directed human beings that Knowles refers to. The

teachers bemoan the fact that the students are not good at problem solving, generating ideas, reflecting and theorizing and do not engage in the higher cognitive level processes that is expected of them. Students tend not to participate in class and are not good at discussions. The rigorous and structured pre-tertiary education, which assumes a certain approach to learning, clearly encourages a more didactic approach and consideration must be given to the investigations of these situational constraints with a view to creating opportunities for students to take on responsibilities for their own learning and at a time when they see fit. It is not until the end of the class when students stay behind to ask the teachers questions in private that they begin to open up and start to express themselves.

Independency comes with confidence and in order to engender more confidence in the student, the teachers should refrain from giving over information but rather find ways of encouraging the students to analyse the material on the basis of their own experiences. Handing out a set of problems rather than a set of facts for the students to engage themselves in a process of discovery should be encouraged. This way the students will understand that they need to be in control of their own learning. To this end it might also be helpful for the teacher to leave the classroom sometimes during discussions to encourage a more active exchange of ideas. This will also reinforce the students' understanding that it does not always have to be the teacher that comes up with the answers.

There is an expectation on the part of the teacher that requires the students to think independently and develop a capacity to solve problems or fashion products in a way that is innovative. This type of learning does not compare well with The Academy students' perception of learning and results in an adverse affect on the educational process, and in turn, the final outcome. The work of Hofsted [1980, 1991] Hofsted and Bond [1984] explains how Asian societies generally tend to be high Power Dimension [PD] cultures and are used to power being distributed within a society. This approach encourages students to readily accept, in fact expect, the highly authoritarian teaching approach that they experienced in secondary school and results in a lack of self-discipline and confidence with limited involvement to their learning. The Senior Lecturer of Applied Arts commented, *"for a successful learning outcome the students need to play a more independent role in their education rather than relying on the teacher exclusively. They need to become more expressive and constructive in their approach to problem solving and feel comfortable taking part in a mutual exchange of information."* There is, however, much evidence to show that the customary practice of individual inquiring or looking at things critically rather than group emphasis is a process that students are uncomfortable with and one which results in a conflict in the teaching and learning philosophy presently demonstrated at The Academy. It is apparent that whilst The Academy strives to encourage individuality in students from day one, this approach is too impulsive for the majority of students. As Biggs [1989, p.15] suggests, teachers need to be better aware of students' approaches to learning and

adjust their teaching accordingly, and, as Sotto recommends, help arrange things so that their learners have experiences which suit them [1994 p.108]

5.2.2   Experience [Described by Knowles as an increasing resource for learning].

Life experience is a knowledge base, referred to by Knowles [1984, p.64] as a *"growing reservoir of experiences"* that needs to be connected to new learning and should be recognized for its value.   At present there is no attempt to generate a relationship between students' own personal experiences and prior knowledge and the way they presently learn. Nor is any attempt being made to use previously learned skills to acquire new ones, as suggested by Cooper & McIntyre [1996] and Wang and Palincsar [1989]. The formal teacher-student relationship applied in class activities run by local staff identified a security with previous teaching and learning methodologies. On the other hand the more organic approach adopted by overseas teachers identified inhibitions during class activities.   These two approaches, sitting at opposite ends of the spectrum, causes confusion for the students. Both local and overseas teachers need to work together to find a suitable way forward.   For true success ways need to be found to make learning less stressful. Teachers need early advice on study techniques and systematic instruction and development on presentation of materials.   The teachers need to find ways of linking their class presentations to students existing knowledge and expectations and find ways of instruction that students' can relate to and interact with. Relevant pages or chapters of reading should be specified to help the students understand the requirements of the task. Then and only then, when students begin to show confidence and independence' should teachers begin to introduce new ways of learning.

Teachers need to adjust the lecture presentation in the light of class reaction in an attempt, as Brookfield explains, to assist the students to become the *"originators of their own thinking and feeling"* [1986, p.100]. They need to better understand their students' learning styles. The present method of face-to-face confrontations in a society where the basic rule is hierarchy first, vision of truth second' should be avoided. Teachers need to find a way of teaching that will accommodate past experiences and theories by becoming sensitive to how students learn and, as Sotto suggests, work with whatever motivation is already present in their brains. It is after all natural to view our standpoint from a theory we already have. Sotto, points out, new learning strategies should take old learning habits into consideration. [1994 p.11].

5.2.3   Readiness to learn: [Described by Knowles as the developmental tasks of a persons social Role].

Students appear fixed in their ways and they tend to follow a path that confirms their original thinking, ignoring things that are unfamiliar to them. They require a process of learning that will stimulate them to question their original hypothesis and encourage them to see things from other points of view. If they are not encouraged to challenge their own thinking, they will never be able to think outside of the box. If they can learn to come to their own conclusions and realize that in the process they can dispense with original theories and develop new ones, then they will be more readily open to new ideas and challenges. Sotto points out:

> *"Teachers who practice an open approach are much more likely to encounter group reactions – both productive and unproductive – than teachers who practice a didactic approach."* [1994, p.171]

He goes on to suggest that questions should invite participation rather than appear to test.

> *"If learners are asked only factual questions, they tend to process the material to be learnt in a superficial way. But if they are asked questions which require some 'thinking', they tend to process the material more deeply."* p.176

5.2.4   **Orientation to learning:** Described by Knowles as postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application.

Students at The Academy are presently failing to make the shift from one of subject-centredness to one of problem-centredness that Knowles refers to. They fail to bring theoretical knowledge to a practical situation and find it hard to connect what they learn in class with what is required to mount a theatre production. More integration is required between theory and practice with time allowed for specific instruction and direction, continually implementing the *"process of teach and apply, teach and apply"* as described by one of the teachers. The Academy benefits from small class numbers, thus allowing for the possibility to organize a much wider range of learning activities in which students can become actively involved. It seems appropriate to start with theory, as theory is the first route of students' learning, and gives students some background on which to experiment. Theory without practice in performing arts is useless as one needs to appraise the theory in light of the practice.

The present lack of play in workshop situations identifies students' lack of confidence and a need to practice problem solving. For most Academy students problem solving is a new and unfamiliar practice requiring careful planning, development and ongoing support for success. It is a practice that puts great demand on students' collaborative ability and intellectual aptitude and for some it is clearly a difficult process. It was noted how the performing schools production requirements monopolize much time and energy and demand much concentration with unrealistic fixed deadlines. The main aim should not be so much to convey excessive amounts of information but to encourage a certain attitude and develop an inquiring mind.

The Hong Kong primary and secondary school system reinforces an understanding that one has to have a teacher to learn – it precludes a sense of independency and experimentation and reinforces the idea that learning follows teaching. Sotto suggests, *"Teaching has to stop before learning can begin"* [1994, p.169]. Students need to absorb and experiment with new ideas and techniques; they need to learn that they are capable of learning a great many things that they have not been specifically taught. The nature of performing arts subjects demands a customarily enquiring approach that is unfamiliar to students' previous learning styles and expectations, and as such the teachers need to find ways of encouraging participation. The structured tutorials and seminars constitute very valuable learning experiences and the small group teaching offers good opportunities for experiential learning. Small group teaching allows teachers to structure the class session carefully and build in a variety of activities, individual work, and discussions in pairs and/or small groups to encourage students to become more confident about participating and more readily prepared to experiment. Nevertheless, it seems that the students have no common base for discussion and they need to be given more opportunity to develop their debating skills.

Generally the teachers seem to approach all classes in earnest and are very conscientious about completing the lesson objectives. However, sparing a few moments for exchange of pleasantries at the commencement of a session might help the students relax and encourage autonomy over their learning. Stimulus for independence and confidence in experimentation might be to 'revise' an article or show a short video for discussion to set clear objectives and inform students about the aims of the class and what is expected of them. If teachers want to encourage students to ask questions, they should consider Watkins' [2000] comments, which describe how Chinese students only like to ask questions based on knowledge and understanding. In this respect it might therefore be helpful to encourage them to write questions down first, before they speak, to give them more time to structure them appropriately.

5.2.5   Motivation to learn: [Described by Knowles as internal motivation]

It was noted that The Academys' entrance qualifications are substantially lower than the other Universities in Hong Kong and the only option for some to earn 'degree' status. This results in many of the students arriving ill prepared for the kind of educational objectives that they face. To help students, teachers need to encourage internal motivation. As suggested by Knowles, they need to relate to students' previous learning styles as well as stimulating interest in the subject and helping them to acquire new knowledge. It would not be an effective approach, as one member of staff took, to simply believe that all students are there because they want to be there and because they are passionate about the subject and have a visualization of their future careers. Most do not, and The Academy needs to make sure that the students fully understand the schools' mission. They need to be briefed adequately before their training begins in order to attain a clear understanding of the opportunities available to them and an understanding of how they can best gain from the experience.

For their part the teachers need to make sure that the students fully understand what is being presented in class. Sotto tells of the importance of spending time preparing the classroom.

> *"This helps to set the stage. In the theatre this is sometimes called the suspension of disbelief, and it is generated by things like lights going down and a curtain going up."* [1994, p.94]

In this way it would help if the teachers were to present an overview at the start of the course and again at the beginning of each class so that students can understand the 'big picture' as it unfolds. Carefully worded handouts including diagrams and charts that summarize the main points of the discussion need to be distributed at the beginning of each lecture. It was noted that when this did take place, as it did in some classes, the students showed more confidence and took part in discussions. Students need to be shown how key points relate to each other and they need to be offered a summary at the end of the lecture, to strengthen their understanding and broaden their viewpoint.

5.2.6   Creative and Critical Thinking

Whilst the data from the questionnaires show a high percentage of students aspiring to a student-driven environment, there is no evidence to substantiate that students express their thoughts and opinions freely or take on new information and ideas. It is clear from classroom observation that students' ability in independent exploration and creative and critical thinking is uncharted. To change their learning behaviour and encourage students to exchange opinions, think critically and make judgment requires dedication and encouragement. The suggestion by one teacher to approach things in a

mechanical rather than an emotional or personal way seemed far more successful than the friendly, informal approach adopted by most of the teachers. An informal approach may work in the professional world, but it is clearly not conducive to the way The Academy students carry out their learning.

Whitaker (1995) advises:

> *"Schools need to focus on encouraging students to think for themselves, to be critical thinkers because critical thinking enables us to do our thinking for ourselves – to employ relevant information, to weigh evidence, to take account of context, to challenge generalizations and insubstantial assumptions"* p.96

These are not characteristics of Hong Kong Chinese, and as he goes on to point out, the ability and courage to produce a new response to a problem, is a characteristic of a Western education requiring a supportive social framework and a trial and error approach. As we have noted, the Chinese secondary education system does not offer this in the way that secondary schools in the West do, not least because the heart of their education system depends on a deep respect for past writers and masters. Subjectivity in the arts is difficult for them to grasp. Making them understand that there is no right or wrong answer in the arts, that the correct answer is one that suits them or the situation in question, is difficult for them to comprehend. As Whitaker [1995] points out:

> *"Teachers must encourage children to look beneath the surface of things to detect non-obvious bases of relationship among the elements in a problem, on both of these counts, there are problems in Chinese culture"* p.24

The question that arises then is whether the teachers at The Academy are able to change students' pattern of thinking and can successfully encourage them to think more laterally. Cooper & McIntyre [1996] and Wang and Palincsar [1989], suggest three areas of importance that cause the Hong Kong Chinese students to *"lag behind"* in the field of creativity:

- The first is the Hong Kong Chinese characteristic that values collectivism rather than the encouragement of students' sense of autonomy.
- The second is the consequence of Chinese pedagogical practices which emphasize the learning of basic knowledge and analytical skills, rather than the self-exploratory activities that would engender an interest in cultivating creativity.

- The third is the effect that standardized testing has on determining students' destinies. This creates a drive to do well on analytical tests with little emphasis on creative achievement.

With few opportunities for students to engage in creative exploration, coaching is needed to help students understand how to be resourceful and give them the confidence that will encourage them to be innovative. It is often said that creativity cannot be taught but there is a need to teach the techniques and fundamental practices involved in creative expression, to give students the tools to exhibit creativity openly and more easily. Philip E. Hacker an external advisor to The Academy identifies these missing elements. In his Advisory report he suggests:

> *"It is necessary for students to be exposed to a variety of artistic opportunities that will evoke the emotion and encourage the independent exploratory, creative and critical thinking that is necessary to succeed in creative endeavours."* [2002, p.28]

Unfortunately, as he points out, these subjects are presently missing in The Academy curriculum.

5.2.7   Practical Application

The nature of training in performing arts requires an approach where students can carry out practical experimental assignments and be open to discussion and criticism. From the interviews it became clear that students understand the relevance and were generally positive about practical assignments. They are able to develop substantive understanding, gain professional knowledge and build on confidence. However, this is dependant on their being given explicit criteria or standards to work from and continual guidance and clear directions, particularly at the beginning, with feedback throughout the project to make sure they are on the right track. Not unless a number of supervised design tasks have been completed and students have experienced a range of learning activities in which they become actively involved, as well as being able to observe carefully, are they able to move on to real life production assignments. This is where they need to bring theory into practice and reflect on their experiences and knowledge in a real working setting. Here they need to think on their feet and be ready to be critical about the actual operational procedures. This requires a big jump for the students, and the success of these production assignments depends purely on whether the teacher has been able to support and guide individual students to an independent level where they can confidently take charge of their own learning. Sotto [1994] advises:

> *"Nothing encourages thinking more than practical projects, especially one which is of an experimental or observational nature."* p.176

5.2.8   Memorization

The concern that students have not learnt how to learn, but rather have been taught to memorize and reproduce information regardless of whether they have understood the text or not, was echoed throughout the research. Whitaker [1995] describes this approach to learning as one that fails to encourage curiosity and leaves little time for creative thinking. It creates students who are passive learners completely syllabus dependent and who rely on rote learning methods. Watkins and Biggs [1996] do not necessarily agree with this hypothesis. They say that we should not mistakenly assume that when the students are memorizing they are rote learning at the expense of understanding, but rather they are learning repetitively to ensure retention and to enhance understanding, [Watkins & Biggs, 2001]. They suggest that when observed making use of memorization, the Hong Kong students are not necessarily rote learners as described by the Western teachers, but make use of memorization to help develop their understanding. Should we therefore blame memorization for the students' perceived failure to become innovative, independent and critical thinkers? Biggs [1966, p.57, p.63] says there is no evidence that they are rote learners any more than their Western counterparts, but rather they use repetition as a tool for meaning. He suggests that the explanation for this thinking *"lies in cultural differences in the perception of the relationship between memorizing and understanding",* and is something that seems to be entirely misunderstood by the Western teachers at The Academy. Watkins and Biggs [1966] point out:

> *"Western teachers mistakenly assume that when Chinese students memorise, they are rote learning at the expense of understanding. In fact, Chinese students frequently learn repetitively, both to ensure retention and to enhance understanding."* p.6

As Kember and Gow [1989] wrote, this learning approach makes use of both deep and surface learning by first understanding the task and then memorizing it. Students who learn in this way actually make use of the teachers' instruction to learn with understanding and this also allows them to cope with second language instruction. As Watkins and Biggs [1996] explain, memorizing and understanding should not be seen as separate but rather as interlocking processes.

5.3   TEACHING AND LEARNING STYLES

Honey & Mumford write that activities that are geared to a particular learning style can cause a mismatch if the students' learning style preference is different. [1992, p. 2]. In analyzing the data drawn from the questionnaires, the conflict that Honey & Mumford refer to can be seen to be the result of The Academy teachers' expectations of the students' approach to learning versus the students'

actual approach to learning. The teachers require the students to learn like activists/pragmatists rather than acknowledging their actual reflector/theorist tendencies. Throughout the research students demonstrated their difficulty when put in a position of deciding on things without a principle or concept. They demonstrated their difficulty at working with alternative techniques preferring the opportunity to ponder activities, showing reassurance in the opportunity to observe and think before acting. Like the reflectors/theorists the students appreciate time to explore and analyze a situation and they dislike participating in situations that emphasize emotions and feelings, showing discomfort with unstructured activities where ambiguity and uncertainty are high and where they have to engage in competitive teamwork and role-playing exercises where there is drama and excitement and where there is an array of varied challenges to embark upon. These tendencies may not be comparable to performing arts students in the West. In this respect time and encouragement is needed to help them make the transfer from the highly authoritative approach to learning to a more student-driven and independent approach.

Unfortunately it was apparent from the observation sessions that some of the teachers at The Academy lack understanding of these cognitive abilities, tending to stick to their own teaching methodologies. They do not acknowledge the past experiences that students bring to the learning encounter, nor do they acknowledge the schemata [referred to by Sotto, 1994] that is already present in the students' brains. Yet, when asked, most teachers seemed genuinely aware of students' different learning approaches and appeared sympathetic to their needs, but in actuality showed little evidence of any adjustment to their normal approaches and made no provision to cater for these different learning styles. Sotto [1994] explains how in certain situations *"teachers genuinely believe that they are doing something which they are not."* p.184

This conflict in the teaching/learning approach is the result of teachers not recognizing students' techniques and not developing strategies that can help them. To break away from previous learning styles requires opportunities for experimentation in an environment where the student can feel safe to contribute and not subjected to excessive pressure. Teachers need to find ways of working that will encourage a positive feeling and a right to communicate. Students need to feel that they can question and offer feedback. They need to know that they do have valid things to say – and the right to say them. They need to be taught how to construct knowledge and broaden horizons. In the interviews the students expressed a preference for lecturers to explain theories practically, rather than endless talk, which would imply room for encouraging discussion and collaboration in class. Students need to enjoy themselves, curiosity needs to be nurtured so that they will continue to want to learn and know how to do so. Perseverance and gaining the trust of the students through humour, or even good natured bullying at times, will develop their strength of character, help them develop master life skills, broaden their horizons and cultivate a sense of commitment to their education.

The restraint students show in both verbal and emotional expression is under the circumstances not surprising and the teachers should not be shocked when they receive little response from students. Decision-making should not be expected to take place in the classroom, and time would best be set aside for discussions to take place behind closed doors. Classes should therefore be planned with frequent breaks, to allow for back-stage discussions. The teacher must always be afforded respect, so students feel they should first agree with whatever the teacher has to say before voicing a different opinion, preferably through a third party, and in confidence. When the teacher is not in a position of authority the students feel very uncomfortable and this is likely to have an effect on the amount of participation that they are prepared to give in class. Hong Kong Chinese respond to hierarchy with a sense of security and comfort.

If teachers can develop a clearer understanding of students' previous learning methodologies and understand why they respond in the way that they do, a better appreciation of the difference between their own teaching styles and students learning styles will take place. This will offer better support to students and ultimately help to bridge the gap, encourage sustained effort and awareness, and develop a sympathetic understanding of students' learning habits. Howe [1984] cautions,

> *"Considerable help and encouragement from the teacher is needed before a student will start to make use of a new skill in any circumstances that are at all different from those in which it was first acquired."* p.14

5.4   PERFORMING ARTS THROUGH ENGLISH

It is clear that the bi-literate and tri-lingual proficiencies required of students in Hong Kong is of great consequence. Cantonese, Putonghua and English language are all significant in their different ways in the development of Hong Kong and Hong Kong identities. Cantonese remains the dominant language of every-day life, of the performing arts, cinema, radio and the media, but, as we have noted, Putonghua has become the prime language of communication with China. Whilst it is true that English has lost its political supremacy, it has nevertheless retained the status of being the lingua franca of global communication, and according to the research is strongly recommended by teachers and students to remain the medium of instruction at The Academy.

The difficulties of studying Applied Arts subjects through the medium of the English language, however, are evident. It is clear that the consequence of the change in the English language policy at secondary level has culminated in a deterioration of students' English language abilities, resulting in difficulties for those students who are not fully conversant in the language. The curriculum demands

English language proficiency at a level many students have not achieved, yet they are expected to participate in high grade-level instruction that demands complex cognitive and linguistic abilities. Students need to communicate effectively, and in a collaborative way, but the elementary to mid-intermediate language level at which they presently enter The Academy, clearly puts them at a disadvantage. As one of the external assessors to The Academy, Rosemary Ingham [2005] said, *"the lexicon to describe a painting or sculpture and convey its subtle details and nuances is extensive. The problem created by teaching art history courses in English is insurmountable."*

The HKSAR EC remind us that on graduating from secondary school, language skills need to be further consolidated at university level, and an effective mechanism put into place to ensure that university students attain the required language standards upon graduation. At present the only policy in place for improving language abilities at The Academy is the 60/80 hours of training per year, which is aimed at assisting students to pass an English language exam before graduating. At present English language levels are not set as a pre-requisite to any of the core or major courses. In addition the language training itself appears too broad to accommodate all of the many different specialist subjects. The effect is that some students are falling behind, resulting in a situation where the mixed language abilities in major courses as well as mixed abilities in English language courses, all suffer. Students need help to overcome inevitable misunderstandings. Whilst it is appreciated that the purpose of The Academy is to train Performing Artists, and that there may not be time in the curriculum to work through language issues, it is nevertheless felt that students would be better served if they were allowed to follow a special curriculum that addresses second language learners. Even if this means that time is taken away from performing arts subjects, in the long run this would be beneficial.

Teachers have difficulty working out the level to pitch content and make it relevant and understandable to students who may not have the English language proficiency. It is a challenge to make sure that students do not fall behind in their academic development because of their linguistic difficulties. Whilst teachers are conscious of keeping the content challenging and exciting for those students who do have the English language proficiency, it is obviously difficult working at two or more different levels. The students expressed criticism at the teachers' ability to teach subject specialism to 2nd language learners and this is a problem that needs to be addressed. Language and content are intricately intertwined and an atmosphere needs to be created where students do not feel vocally restricted, but free to express themselves, and explore thoughts and feelings in a non-native speaking environment, through a creative construction process, where they can put together the bits of language that they know, using them in a purposeful and interactive manner. This should help to identify whether a student does not know the content material or is in fact unable to demonstrate their understanding because of language barriers.

It was noted how some teachers are prepared to tolerate talking in class. It was not clear whether this is because they were giving the students the opportunity to translate meaning for each other or whether they were not totally in control. If teachers cannot work out when translation is taking place then they should build frequent breaks into the lessons, and formalize time for translating and sharing meaning and also for asking questions. To encourage debate it would help to let students know before hand that discussions will take place [say] after a break so that they can be mentally prepared. It was noted during the observation sessions that students have a relatively short attention span, particularly when classes are presented in second language instruction, and for this reason more breaks should be planned. More questions should be asked during class, rather than, as is the situation at present, of waiting till the end to reinforce and assess students understanding of what has been taught. This will encourage the students to be more attentive and give the teachers hints on what needs reinforcing.

It has been suggested that subject content be simplified to meet students' linguistic and cognitive levels. To simplify subject content would only have the effect of reducing the overall standard of education. What is recommended, however, is that instructional modifications are undertaken to deal with content in a more challenging and creative way. In addition, it is also recommended that by devoting a concentrated block of time during the first year, students can have the opportunity to develop their English language competencies to a level where they have the language ability to deal more easily with their immediate practical and academic needs, as they proceed through the programme.

Teachers and students would seem to agree with this conclusion. However, integrating performing arts training into English language teaching, and visa versa, could raise some initial problems. As mentioned, teachers do not know how to address second language instructional needs in the major study areas, and more importantly, language teachers, up until now, have had little influence on the performing arts. In fact, books on ''Language and Performing Arts'' are missing from most book lists and little work, if any, has been done in this area. Notwithstanding the above obstacles, teachers should try to use performing arts content to engage language development and conversely language teachers should try to use English language classes as a means of expanding performing arts knowledge. If communication skills are directly related to applied arts subjects and developed alongside the course content, this should have the effect of dulling the students' indifference to linguistic issues. Teachers can then seek the opportunity to help students' progress in understanding subject content, whilst developing English language skills without sacrificing the acquisition of subject specialism.

5.5 CHANGE PROCESS

If change is to take place, careful monitoring and evaluation of such an initiative should be a vital part of any future plan. Much time needs to be set aside to design the process, evaluate the progress, and continually address the development. It seems that educational research is abundant with examples of innovations that have been highly effective, but innovations can be equally disastrous if practiced by teachers who lack the understanding, support and responsiveness to make them work. Scott points out:

> *"there is little doubt that effective, sustainable change in education – whether it be program change, organisational change or personal change – does not just happen, it must be led."* [1999, p.170]

He further encourages us to look outwards to connect with the wider environment [1999, p.173]. He quotes Fullan [1993] to remind us that educational institutions should not operate in isolation from the society of which they are part. *"Many organizations work hard on internal development but fail to keep a proactive learning stance towards the environment"*.

Highlighted in literature relating to educational change is the complexity of human responses in a change process. As Hord [1987, p.93] points out, *"change is a highly personal experience"* which we as humans, he maintains, will react differently towards. To ensure successful change, guided staff development must be put into place, so that teachers can relate meaningfully to innovations without them becoming destabilizing and threatening. Rudduck [1988] explains:

> *"If we are interested in substantial change, we may need to find structure and resources to help teachers to re-examine their purposes."* p.210

This pinpointed the need to appraise teachers' motives and perceptions as a means of encouraging a collaborative culture, the 'key' [as defined by Blenkin, et al, 1992] to promoting change. They suggest that students act as participants in the change process to prepare them for leadership in their own society. Scott [1999] advises:

> *"It is important when studying the change process not just to look at how best to develop, implement and monitor a learning program innovation but to concurrently understand how best to develop a workplace milieu conducive to continuous quality improvement and innovation."* p.14

A number of writers refer to the initiation of change as a journey. A journey, which no matter how well planned, can go through different and unexpected experiences and processes along the way. They talk about change as ongoing and that constant amendment should be expected. They warn that change takes time to take root and become part of the culture, with most writers referring to a period of up to five years. Fullan a leading writer on the subject of 'change' specifies, *"change is a process, not an event."* [1992, p.41]

Fullan explains how change is one of the most essential characteristics of any innovative educational institution as it faces the shifting social and technological needs of students and their societies in our rapidly changing world. Nowhere else can this be more true than in Hong Kong, and at The Academy. Education providers need to understand the demands of the society and know how they might influence future requirements. China's acceptance into the World Trade Organization in 2001 and its hosting of the Olympic Games in 2008 are just two examples of changing influences as China's doors become further opened to the world, which will ultimately bring more opportunities to The Academy graduates. The Academy should, *"keep its eyes close on China's development and revise its curriculum accordingly"*.

According to the reports in the Reform Proposals and discussions lead by the Hong Kong Government there seems to be an agreement that more time within the primary and secondary school system should be found for students to take part in more diverse learning activities. The present system of concentrating on preparing students for examinations, where the arts is promoted through extra curricula activities, has come under much debate. The report outlines the philosophical changes and the need to remodel the existing structure, trimming 20% of the existing curriculum which is competitive and outdated, to accommodate new elements of learning. *[Reform Document] The proposal views the Arts as,* "an education that can contribute significantly to the development of an all-round person, particularly in the domain of 'aesthetics'." These attributes will, it goes on to say:

> *"help to enhance the competitive edge of Hong Kong in the 21st Century"* and *"help to cultivate an individual's ability to live and work in a diverse society and cross-cultural environment."* p. 25

If the Government is serious about strengthening the arts at pre-university level to encourage creativity in future generations, then this will bring the education system more in line with the philosophical thinking that concerns The Academy. Teachers and students interviewed were in agreement that it is not enough to promote arts through extra-curricular activities, and that pre-university education, should develop students' creative, imaginative and innovative skills.

Changing the level of students' understanding of the arts at pre-tertiary level would then have an effect on how the curriculum at The Academy could be addressed. However, it is generally felt that changes resulting from the Reform Policies would be insignificant and slow, and only by introducing arts education at specialist secondary schools and arts focused education in generalist or liberal arts colleges, would there be any impact on the context and the status of arts in general. In this respect it was felt that *"Hong Kong is two generations behind most of the rest of the developed world – including its closest neighbours China and Taiwan."* Head of Design.

Changing the curriculum at The Academy will undoubtedly involve a complex exercise, and can only be made possible if all teachers and students acknowledge the need for a continuous interactive dialectical relationship between each other, as well as between theory and practice. A dialectical relationship between teacher and student would seem to be an essential prerequisite for understanding where each is coming from and the boundaries that they face, just as an interactive relationship between theory and practice is essential to understand the complexity of the subject matter and how it drives the practice. We need, as Poster [1999, p.176] suggests, to involve everyone in the process and work to a long-term plan in which the parts make up the whole.

Clearly effective change at The Academy cannot be brought about unless the teachers are fully on board. However, there is much to suggest from this research that The Academy teachers do not fully appreciate the complexities of the educational process and the requirements for its ultimate success, and that there needs to be increased dialogue to involve teachers in this way, with direction not just from the top down but input from the bottom up. The general consensus from the students was also that there is a feeling of insufficient channels in The Academy through which the students could express their thoughts without any perceived undesirable backlash.

Any changes need to be planned in such a way as to support the educational advance of all students as well as to ensure its continuous development. Changes should be evolutionary rather than revolutionary, and they must go hand in hand with the professional development of teachers, without which they will not have any lasting value or effect. As Scott [1999] points out:

> *"There is little doubt that effective, sustainable change in education – whether it be program change, organisational change or personal change, does not just happen, it must be led."* p.170. He goes on to say *"leadership does not just fall to people in management positions – this is, in fact, a recurring misconception…… everyone can be (and often is) a leader of change in their own area of expertise."* p.170

The curriculum needs to be revised to incorporate the issues relating to the changing world of Hong Kong. More emphasis and encouragement should be placed on the students' educational and cultural background and how and what they think. Teaching methods should incorporate ways to nurture and help students become more expressive and constructive in their approach to problem solving, in order to deal with the undisciplined subject matter within the performing arts. There is no other solution to bridging this gap than increasing awareness, sustained effort and patience on both sides and the focusing on new abilities demanded by societal changes of the moment.

5.6   FINAL ANALYSIS

It would seem that a successful learning outcome in the training of artists, would come out of experiences that lend themselves to experimentation and practical assignments - vocational training with an academic edge. However, the passive mode of learning that the Hong Kong students are accustomed to suggests that they need a more structured approach to their education emphasizing a solid foundation of basic knowledge and an underlying support, with emphasis on encouragement to pursue learning independently by developing an ability to think on their feet and accept accountability.

Generally teachers have adopted a friendly, informal approach to their teaching, like fellow colleagues working in the theatre. However, interaction in most of the classrooms is complex, made especially difficult with the existing classroom layout, which suggests an environment where a performance is expected of the teacher. The viewpoint that the teacher 'entertains' the student is necessary, at the very early stages of the students training, but as students progress through the programme the teachers will need to move to a more creative approach that encourages participation and innovation. To do this it is recommended to commence with a top down approach, one that the students can connect with and relate to, but one that will over the years encourage independence and freethinking and eventually allow them to let go. Something that Cooper & McIntyre [2001] and Winnips, K. [2002] refer to this as a scaffolding approach to learning, where the teacher provides more support in the early stages of the course. This support is gradually faded until learners become self-reliant. As we have noted, such behaviour is contrary to the students' cultural philosophies. Exams should be included in the syllabus as a means to motivate them, at least during the initial years, until they have learnt to adjust and take on board the philosophy of continual assessment.

The social and political structure that has taken place in Hong Kong since 1997 would seem to demand a curriculum from The Academy that goes beyond its present foreign model, one that can offer students a better preparation for life in their own society. Students need to be independent and able to communicate effectively, have creative intent and a sense of commitment, and the ability to keep abreast of new information and skills and be comfortable in constructing knowledge. Students need

nurturing to become well versed in artistic skills. They need to learn how to analyze, judge and establish their own values, and this can only be made possible if the design of the curricula is premised on students' learning experiences.

Biggs [1996] points out that Chinese students' approach to learning varies as a function of the learning environment. Yes, students are comfortable learning repetitively, and, yes, they have good memorization skills but as he goes on to say, this does not necessarily mean that they are predisposed to surface learning. Hong Kong students, Biggs comments, are able to seek clues, make meaning and adapt their learning to succeed. The teachers at The Academy need to embrace these skills to the advantage of the academic programme. They need to give students written notes to memorize and they need to give them exams to measure their attainment, so that they will use this measurement and what they have memorized as a foundation to give them confidence for exploration.

5.7   CRITIQUE OF RESEARCH

Investigating the situation in its actual context and observing groups at work together helped to determine communication styles and ascertain shared beliefs and measure interactive processes. Statistics were relatively accessible, and generally the questionnaires were able to determine interpersonal communication styles, attitudes and behaviours, resulting in a clear understanding of the teaching and learning philosophy. The interviews proved to be valid and reliable. They were not physically or psychologically invasive, and confidentiality was preserved. The results addressed the purpose of the investigation, disclosing a legitimate interpretation of the situation and defining the viewpoint of both the teachers and the students. Since the institution is the only one of its kind in Hong Kong, it is difficult to disguise it but the research was nevertheless careful not to identify staff and students by name. In all cases generic names have been used. The research was not of any subversive nature, and generally those involved were cooperative, understanding that the staff and institution might ultimately reap the benefits. Participants gave their time voluntary. They understood the benefits to them and it was felt that they articulated their beliefs well.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The hypothesis underpinning this research paper relies on the supposition that a successful educational experience depends on the degree to which there is synchronization between the imported educational policy and the cultural features of the host organization. The key to a successful educational programme lies in the beliefs, values and behaviours of those charged with its implementation and realization: both student and teacher alike.

It is believed that to simply superimpose an American performing arts degree programme upon an educational institution in Hong Kong without due attention to the characteristics of the Hong Kong students – the manner in which they are accustomed to learning, the cultural and social factors that inform the style and patterns which their learning adopts, and the strengths and weaknesses that are inherent therein - is by no means ideal. Indeed, research has indicated that if The Academy can hope to realize its institutional mission, it must look to ways of developing an effective educational package that is unique to Hong Kong. One could go further to suggest that if it is to fulfil its mandate and foster and provide for training, education and research in the performing and related technical arts, then it has an obligation to society to strive for a curriculum and implementation strategy that acknowledges the teaching and learning within The Academy. It must embrace the very real idea of continued reassessment of the content and delivery, with the goal of creating and adapting an educational programme that is appropriate for Hong Kong's students and teachers today.

Whilst some aspects of the imported educational practices at The Academy harmonize well with the indigenous culture, namely those subjects areas where fact retention is more important than original thought like history and civilization, other courses require a rather greater degree of change. The curriculum must encourage teachers to be sympathetic to the different cultural philosophies – philosophies relating to teaching and learning which acknowledge the Hong Kong students' cultural identities and study habits in relation to course content and task demands. In particular, teachers must recognize the Hong Kong students' powerful capacity for information retention, and the limitations of their pedagogical experiences at pre-tertiary level and cultural aspects that seem to inhibit their instinct to forge and create new ideas, a skill so vital for a career in the arts. This flexible and considered approach would be more critical for success than the present unilateral adoption of a model reflecting the values and organizational patterns of performing arts institutions in the United States. This brings us back to Eisner's statement [1998] which was referenced at the beginning of this research and which states:

"No single educational programme is appropriate for all students everywhere, forever."

p..v

To conclude, it is the belief of this research that a greater understanding of the relationship between androgogy and the approach taken by Hong Kong students of applied arts must take place at The Academy.

6.2   CULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS TO TEACHING AND LEARNING.

What we see in the research is a difference in the understanding of values between teacher and student. Values and expectations are rooted in individual cultures and which can result in differences that affect the training process. These differences, referred to by psychologists as 'role patterns' are the products of a society's culture; *the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another."* Hofstede [1991, p.4-5] Such differences can create a state of nervousness caused by uncertainty or unfamiliarity, and when faced with this kind of situation students often avoid it by maintaining a strict code of behaviour and belief in their own theories. Cross-cultural learning situations can be rife with impulsive judgments and perplexities between teachers and students, and in the situation at The Academy, where the teacher comes from an individualistic society, and students come from a collectivist society, this encourages feelings that may be rational in one culture, but irrational in another, proper in one culture, and improper in another.

The solution to bridging this individualistic gap requires increased awareness and sustained effort on both sides. Hofstede's [1986] advice, that any cross-cultural learning conflict should be dealt with on two levels seems valid, and The Academy would be advised to follow his suggestions to *"teach the teacher how to teach"* and *"teach the learner how to learn"*. Both parties must consider the complex intertwined system of values, attitudes, beliefs and norms, as described by Adler [1977] that give meaning and significance to both individual and collective identity.

For these reasons alone, The Academy should set up a training programme to help develop the teachers' and students' understanding of the educational and cultural differences that surround every day life in the institution. Of course, interaction of human activities is complex, and any planned intervention should be recognized as requiring high levels of sensitivity and skill. In the words of Rudduck [1988, p.210] *"If we are interested in substantial change, we may need to find structure and resources to help teachers re-examine their purposes"*.

Cooper and McIntyre [1996, p.13] suggest that alternative ways of representing subject matter should match students' characteristics. They say that by measuring the characteristics of the student population, teaching methodology and materials can be tailored to meet the specific needs of the students. A unilateral approach of one system or another would not be suitable. At the same time it would be wise to understand the thinking behind the way the learners learn, and adopt a teaching methodology that can facilitate students' previous learning styles and cultural characteristics. Both the teachers and students need to understand where each is coming from and be in an agreement about how to reshape the content of teaching and learning, so that students can learn in such a way that they can readily accept a more innovative approach to teaching and learning.

6.2.1 Approaches to teaching and learning

At The Academy the Western teachers have simply been immersed into the host culture to feel their way on their own without any official orientation or instruction. They are not fully equipped to deal with the different social, emotional and educational needs of the students, as their reference point stems from a philosophy that teaches and evaluates the students from the point of view of their own self-reference criterion. In a similar way the local teachers also perform in a way that they are accustomed to and continue to teach and evaluate students from the point of view of their own self-reference criteria.

Yet, despite the above differences it seems that both groups of teachers expect the students to engross themselves in competitive teamwork and learn in a predominantly liberal way. Both sets of teachers implied that they expect the students to deal with crisis and engross themselves in a range of diverse activities that are changeable. They expect the students to chair meetings, lead discussions, give presentations and generally have a high profile. They expect them to attend to detail and solve problems, by generating ideas without constraint of policy or structure, all activist characteristics as described by Honey & Mumford [1992]

Yet it was also noted how the local teachers perform within the boundaries of their own comfort zone and apply a traditional training methodology of 'chalk and talk'. At the same time the overseas teachers stick very closely to the style of teaching that matches the imported education objectives. However, their efforts are unrewarded as the students have difficulty relating to the styles of delivery and instruction and the way in which they are expected to organize and analyse process.

It is clear that in order to be effective, local and overseas teachers need to consider adopting different working methods. Methods that may be considered by them as outmoded or unpopular and even more

controlled and restricted than they are accustomed to.   Local teachers may need to adopt methods considered less formal and direct. To encourage a method that cultivates active student participation local and overseas teachers should learn from each other and incorporate appropriate teaching practices that will encourage students to find ways of liberating themselves, using their innate strengths to participate more readily in class.

6.2.2   Students' Approaches to Learning

The students describe themselves as Reflector/Theorists, and in line with the descriptions outlined by Honey & Mumford [1992] identify with characteristics that work best in situations where they are allowed to ponder over activities, take a back seat and are given the opportunity to observe and think before acting. These types of learners like structure, and appreciate time to explore and analyze a situation. They do not like to participate in situations that emphasize emotions and feelings and are uncomfortable with unstructured activities where ambiguity and uncertainty are high. They do not like to act or decide without a principle or concept and are uncomfortable working with alternative, contradictory techniques. p.22/23

Whilst this description depicts the Hong Kong students' approach to learning, it is not in line with the expectations described by the teachers and indeed is not one one would generally associate with that of a performing artist. If The Academy wants to encourage the students to be more in line with the thinking that describes learners with Activists/Pragmatists tendencies, as the research has identified, then it needs to understand and appreciate the students' background and cultural and educational philosophies. It needs to understand the emphasis placed on memorization at a young age and the level of importance placed on examinations at secondary level, as well as the meticulous attention required to learning the Chinese writing system. Bond [1991 p.31] identifies how the fundamental requirement to the attainment of literacy in Chinese requires ability in memorization, visual/spatial aptitude, attention to detail, and sensitivity to surface patterns.

To change students, it is necessary to understand their approach to learning and be responsive to the way they use surface patterns, the way they concentrate on detail and their visual and spatial ability. Biggs [1996a] explains the way the Hong Kong Chinese seek clues, make use of patterns and meaning, react to cultural beliefs, and economic structures, respond to parental expectations and adapt their learning to succeed, as a unique and very valuable approach. This approach has won the Chinese the reputation of being at the top of university graduation lists. It cannot be denied that the Hong Kong student is generally motivated to learn, but without appropriate support to deploy that motivation in the

development of expression and creativity in the preparation for a career in the performing arts, it is wasted.

The ability to produce a new but appropriate response to a problem is more a characteristic of Western culture. Just as an ability to look beneath the surface of things to distinguish non-obvious origins in a problem is also a characteristic of Western culture. If The Academy requires its students to adopt an alternative kind of learning process, then it will need to offer a supportive social and academic framework that provides time and encouragement in an experimental situation.

6.3 FINDINGS OF PERFORMING ARTS EDUCATION THROUGH ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION.

Students' deficiencies in English clearly put them at an educational disadvantage. It is arduous for teachers to build a rapport with students who are inhibited as second language speakers. This problem is also compounded by the fact that students are accustomed to structured and passive learning conditions, with a cultural acceptance that they seldom reveal opinions or express their ideas. It was recognized over and again how this kind of situation causes difficulty for the teachers when trying to identify whether students do not know the content material, or are in fact, unable to demonstrate their understanding because of a language barrier.

A student whose primary language is not English and who is required to learn subject content through the medium of English, needs a special environment. What is needed is an academic culture that offers a responsive, supportive and interactive programme, building on students' confidence in the combined areas of major study content as well as English language.

A demanding curriculum such as the one the students experience at The Academy requires a creative delivery of instruction that is relevant to students' linguistic abilities as well as their abilities within their major study area. Integrating language training and performing arts training should be part of the totality of the educational process. It is difficult to isolate one from the other. The present situation where subject specialism is taught independently from English language could have the effect of artificially detaching the importance of communication through subject specialism and minimizes the importance of language. On the other hand the English language syllabus does not address performing arts subjects where, through creative instruction, students could put language together and use it in a purposeful and interactive way to assist in learning content of major subjects.

Despite the fact that the majority of students and teachers consider English should remain the Academy's medium of instruction, the overall picture nevertheless reveals that students are not ready to function in an academic situation where the cognitive and linguistic expectations are so complex. The curriculum demands of them an English proficiency level that some students have not yet achieved, resulting in them falling behind in their academic development.

Suggestions were made to simplify subject content to meet students' linguistic and cognitive levels. However, to simplify subject content would only have the effect of reducing the overall standard of education. Nevertheless, instructional modifications are clearly necessary, and whilst content should be taught with a challenging and creative approach, it does nevertheless need pitching at a level appropriate for students' language abilities. Devoting a concentrated block of time at the beginning of the first year would give the students the opportunity to develop their language competencies to a level where they can deal more easily with their immediate practical and academic needs.

Presently teachers lack knowledge in this area, but if performing arts content is used to engage language development and conversely language training is used as a means of expanding performing arts knowledge, then communication skills would be directly related to subject specialism and would develop simultaneously.

6.4   INTERACTION BETWEEN STAFF AND STUDENTS – FACILITATION OF LEARNING

Much consideration and discussion needs to be undertaken to discover alternative ways of changing and/or harmonizing the interplay between the existing imported educational policy and the host culture, if the quality of classroom experience, which presently falls short of its potential, is to be improved. Modifications in the content and the manner the teachers organize and deliver instruction to students is needed to ensure that the student will achieve professional competence in the practice of their chosen art to the highest standards.

The Academy needs to find a way to support constructive and positive interaction between the teachers and students to induce self-awareness of teachers and students' own prejudices and values. It needs to encourage observation and analytical skills to help them understand and interact effectively with each other. In this way the institution would be able to integrate cultural phenomena and deal realistically with conflicting situations and problems that occur.

Cross-cultural education, as a subject, should be taught to all teachers through teacher pre-service and in-servicing training. The curriculum in the foundation years should also include cross-cultural education for the teachers and students. This can demonstrate the many ways of behaving and

perceiving the world and could add flexibility and richness to the teachers' and students' experience. Such an approach could help to develop an appreciation for each other, seeing their differences as resources to be explored, rather than as sources of difficulty to be overcome. As a result of a greater awareness teachers may develop modes of teaching which enhance their effectiveness with students, just as a greater awareness on the part of the student could develop new modes of learning that will enhance student effectiveness with their teachers. Encouraging teachers and students to explore and to deal more explicitly with the difficult issue of identity will help them learn more about their cultural origin, whilst at the same time become accustomed to different cultural and educational philosophies. Triandis [1975] suggests that cross-cultural exposure can liberate people to cope with constant change and generate non-hierarchical cultural patterns of exchange. He refers to this as the *"see as other people see"* concept.

The teachers need to provide an essential context for achieving the objectives of enjoyable and effective learning in a new mode. They need to play a crucial role in transforming the learning experiences of students. How well they can transform the character of life in the classroom depends on cultural issues as well as an understanding of the differing potential and talent of individual students. They need to understand the distinctive learning needs of different students to facilitate effective learning for each. For their part, the students will need to work with teachers to understand new patterns, structures and problems and explore different approaches. Time needs to be built in for reflection on the students own learning experiences.

6.5   GLOBAL VERSUS LOCAL DILEMMA FACING THE SCHOOL.

For the past 20 years, The Academy's philosophy has looked outwards for its direction. Whilst this may have been a good starting point in 1985, it is questionable whether this approach remains sound. In general, it seems that those in charge should be mindful of the societal and organizational cultural characteristics and adopt a strategy that is in harmony with the characteristics of the prevailing societal culture that Dimmock [1998, p.367] discusses.

During the research a number of differences came to light that question the amount of cultural, educational and linguistic diversity within the institution, and whether in its present format, it has enough unity to maintain its overall viability. The perplexities that exist between teacher and student, particularly when a teacher comes from an individualistic' society, and students come from a 'collectivist' society, are likely to be profound. Nevertheless, The Academy teachers seem to be unaware of their own ethnocentrism and the students ill prepared to adapt their study habits. As Hofstede [1991 p.366] reminds us, *"culture is learned, not inherited, and societal and organizational cultures are qualitatively different concepts."*

The Hong Kong Educational Reform Proposals suggest strengthening a better sense of belonging and commitment through a greater understanding of the territory and its culture. The teachers were quick to point out that the work at The Academy is starting to become more directly connected to the local culture, and it was generally felt that whilst courses reflecting a European influence should not diminish, a swing toward Asian culture from the more usual western influence is sound. This process, however, needs to be developed purposely rather than consequently as the degree to which the eastern and western cultures can be successfully woven is one that needs careful planning. As Liu [1988] explains, behaviour dictates certain patterns of *'thinking feeling and acting'*, which would be unreasonable to try and change.

6.5   ADOPTING CHANGE IN THE CURRICULUM – A PROPOSAL

The central challenge of academies around the world is to support the performing arts in all their various modes and forms by training artists who come together to create the productions and as a not insignificant by-product of those efforts, to inspire and educate audiences. The Academy in Hong Kong is similar to most institutions of performing arts in the United States in its basic goals, it is also very different. In 1985 it was necessary to fast track graduates to fill the void that existed in the arts community some twenty years before. It is now time to restructure and give students the time and space to develop as theatre practitioners like their counterparts overseas. Especially as they come diffident in what we have highlighted as key liberal arts subjects.

The philosophy of pushing students into the deep end of the pool to make them learn to swim is questionable at best. Indeed, if a student does not want to drown he or she will learn to swim, but that does not mean they will learn to swim well, or that they will develop any appreciation. They need a place for experimentation, opportunities to stimulate thought, a place to explore new ideals with an atmosphere for reflecting and a place allowing imagination to develop. The Academy's curriculum is divided into so many classroom segments, scheduled so closely together, that many, perhaps most, students find it difficult to retain and to process the information they receive. Students need time to absorb and experiment with new ideas and techniques.

As mentioned previously, one way that real change in The Academy can occur is through the introduction of specialist secondary schools. Student success in other countries in these types of institutions demonstrate that the success is not limited to simply providing better prepared arts students, but to contributing to the changing of the culture. Arts education at specialist secondary schools and arts focused education in generalist or liberal arts colleges and universities often have more impact on the context and the status of art within a culture than do tertiary arts academies and

conservatories. In this respect Hong Kong is two generations behind most of the rest of the developed world – including its closest neighbours China and Taiwan. Hong Kong tertiary institutions are still stuck in the thinking that undergraduate places at universities should somehow be determined by market demand and not as a preparation for a cultures long-term goal – which must be intimately related to that culture's ability to initiate change as well as adapt to it.

The Academy has a limited population pool to draw from and the chances of a significant number of its yearly intake becoming artists of the first rank is specious. In that regard, the curriculum should reflect a broader range of possibilities at which students will ultimately find success upon graduation as teachers, writers, researchers, support personnel, audience members, administrators, etc. as well as the 10% or so who will become first rate artists.

Of course changing the learning programme at The Academy will not be easy. It will have an effect not just on practicalities and resource support, and individual resistance is likely. To create a sound establishment of collaborative culture based on the principle of collegiality, one must first have the staff on board to implement pending issues and introduce them to cultural exchange. Fullan reminds us that the purpose of educational change is to:

> *"…. help schools accomplish their goals more effectively by replacing some structures,*
> *programs and/or practices with better ones."* [1991, p.15]

What we can learn from this study is that there is no single way of accomplishing these goals. In the United States, as in Hong Kong, regional differences play a large part in defining what the performing arts are and how aspiring applied artists should be trained. Each region must chart its own path. This will take time and effort and a lot of careful planning to successfully fuse all the components together. Sizer [1985] explains this with a simple metaphor:

> *"a good school does not emerge like a pre-packaged frozen dinner stuck for 15 minutes in a*
> *radar range; it develops from the slow simmering of carefully blended ingredients."* p.22

6.6   FUTURE RESEARCH.

This study has been focused on managing an educational process and specifically on issues surrounding the effective delivery of education in the Department of Applied Arts at The Academy in Hong Kong. The work is only a beginning, but it is hoped that it will be a useful step on the way to improving the quality of education within the institution.

Many of the conclusions might be considered controversial as the research points to difficulties within the Applied Arts curriculum. The purpose however, has not been to reach negative conclusions but to stimulate further discussion, and to help develop a culturally sensitive curriculum that will address the educational needs for those Hong Kong students who choose to engage in this cross-cultural education environment. In this respect any further research that might be undertaken should continue to concentrate on the following points:

1. Teachers' appreciation of students' cultural background and their approaches to learning.
2. Students' limitations in cross cultural endeavours.
3. Limitations caused by second language instruction.
4. Students' abilities and approaches to creative and critical thinking.
5. Difference in expected patterns of teacher/student and student/student interaction.

Research struggles to discover ways of understanding the distinctive as well as complementary behaviour of people from different cultural groups. New theories and ideas frequently emerge, and as a result of this ongoing research, harmony across cultures may be better woven.

Abbreviations

Advanced Diploma	AD
Bachelor of Performing Arts	BFA
Chinese Medium of Instruction	CMI
Confucian-heritage cultures	CHC
Confucian-heritage	CH
Diploma	D
Education & Manpower Bureau	EMB
Education and Manpower Bureau	EMB
English Medium of Instruction	EMI
English Schools Foundation	ESF
Grade Point Average	GPA
Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts	HKAPA
Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination	HKALE
Hong Kong Certificate Education Examination	HKCEE
Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination	HKCEE
Hong Kong University	HKU
Hong Kong	HK
People's Republic of China	PRC
Performing Arts	PA
Power Dimension	PD
Power Distance Index	PDI
Special Administration Region	SAR
Target Oriented Curriculum	TOC
Target Oriented Curriculum	TOC
Technical Arts	TA
United National Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization	UNESCO

The following is an amalgamation of two questionnaires. One that investigated student's preferred learning styles by asking 80 questions - 20 for each of the four styles of 'Activist', 'Reflector', 'Theorist' and 'Pragmatist' and the second which investigated teachers assumption of students learning styles.

Some of the questions are repeated but this is required to relate to the above four learning styles. There are no right or wrong answers. Students and teachers were asked to tick those questions that they agreed with and cross those questions if they did not agreed.

1.	I have strong beliefs about what is right and wrong, good and bad *Do you expect your students to have strong beliefs about what is right and wrong, good and bad*
2.	I often act without considering the possible consequences *Do you expect your students to act without considering possible consequences*
3.	I tend to solve problems using a step-by-step approach *Do you expect your students to solve problems using a step-by-step approach*
4.	I believe that formal procedures and policies are restrictive *Do you think your students believe that formal procedures and policies are restrictive*
5.	I have a reputation for saying what I think, simply and directly *Do you expect your students to say what they think, simply and directly*
6.	I often find that actions based on feelings are as sound as those based on careful thought and analysis *Do your students believe that actions based on feelings are as sound as those based on careful thought and analysis*
7.	I like the sort of work where I have time for thorough preparation and implementation *Do your students like to have time for thorough preparation and implementation*
8.	I regularly question people about their basic assumptions *Do your students question people about their basic assumptions*
9.	What matters most is whether something works in practice *Do your students believe that what matters most is whether something works in practice*
10	I actively seek out new experiences *Do your students actively seek out new experiences*
11	When I hear about a new idea or approach I immediately start working out how to apply it in practice *When your students hear about a new idea or approach do they immediately start working out how to apply it in practice*
12	I am keen on self-discipline such as watching my diet, taking regular exercise, sticking to a fixed routine, etc. *Are your students keen on self discipline*
13	I take pride in doing a thorough job *Do your students take pride in doing a thorough job*
14	I get on best with logical, analytical people and less well with spontaneous, 'irrational' people. *Do your students get on best with logical, analytical people and less well with spontaneous, 'irrational' people.*

15	I take care over the interpretation of available data and avoid jumping to conclusions *Do your students take care over the interpretation of available data and avoid jumping to conclusions*
16	I like to reach a decision carefully after weighting up many alternatives *Do you think your students like to reach a decision carefully after weighting up many alternatives*
17	I am attracted more to novel, unusual ideas than to practical ones *Do you think your students are attracted more to novel, unusual ideas than to practical ones*
18	I don't like disorganized things and prefer to fit them into a coherent pattern *Do your students dislike disorganized things and prefer to fit them into a coherent pattern*
19	I accept and stick to laid down procedures and policies so long as they regard them as an efficient way of getting the job done. *Do your students accept and stick to laid down procedures and policies so long as they regard them as an efficient way of getting the job done.*
20	I like to relate my actions to a general principle *Do your students like to relate their actions to a general principle*
21	In discussions I like to get straight to the point *In discussions do your students like to get straight to the point*
22	I tend to have distant, rather formal relationships with people at work. *Do your students tend to have distant, rather formal relationships with their peers*
23	I thrive on the challenge of tackling something new and different *Do your students thrive on the challenge of tackling something new and different*
24	I enjoy fun-loving, spontaneous people *Do you believe your students enjoy fun-loving, spontaneous people*
25	I pay meticulous attention to detail before coming to a conclusion *Do your students pay meticulous attention to detail before coming to a conclusion*
26	I find it difficult to produce ideas on impulse *Do your students find it difficult to produce ideas on impulse*
27	I believe in coming to the point immediately *Do your students believe in coming to the point immediately*
28	I am careful not to jump to conclusions too quickly *Are your students careful not to jump to conclusions too quickly*
29	I prefer to have as many sources of information as possible – the more data to think over the better. *Do your students believe that the more information and data available to them to the better.*
30	Flippant people who don't take things seriously enough usually irritate me. *Do you think your students believe that flippant people who don't take things seriously enough are irritating*
31	I listen to other people's points of view before putting my own forward *Do your students listen to other people's points of view before putting their own forward*
32	I tend to be open about how I'm feeling *Do your students tend to be open about how they are feeling*
33	In discussions I enjoy watching the maneuverings of the other participants.

	In discussions do your students enjoy watching the maneuverings of their peers
34	I prefer to respond to events on a spontaneous, flexible basis rather than plan things out in advance *Do your students respond to events in a spontaneous, flexible basis rather than plan things out in advance*
35	I tend to be attracted to techniques such as network analysis, flow charts, branching programmes, contingency planning, etc. *Do your students tend to be attracted to techniques such as network analysis, flow charts, branching programmes, contingency planning, etc.*
36	It worries me if I have to rush out a piece of work to meet a tight deadline *Does it worry your students if they have to rush out a piece of work to meet a tight deadline*
37	I tend to judge people's ideas on their practical merits *Do your students judge people's ideas on their practical merits*
38	Quiet, thoughtful people tend to make me feel uneasy *Do quiet, thoughtful people tend to make your students feel uneasy*
39	I often get irritated by people who want to rush things *Do your students get irritated by people who want to rush things*
40	It is more important to enjoy the present moment rather than to think about the past or future *Do you think that your students philosophy is to enjoy the present moment rather than to think about the past or future*
41	I think that decisions based on a thorough analysis of all the information are sounder than those based on intuition. *Do your students believe that decisions based on a thorough analysis of all the information are sounder than those based on intuition*
42	I tend to be a perfectionist *Do your students tend to be perfectionists*
43	In discussions I usually produce lots of spontaneous ideas *In discussions do your students usually produce lots of spontaneous idea*
44	In meetings I put forward practical, realistic ideas *In meetings do your students put forward practical, realistic ideas*
45	More often than not rules are there to be broken *Do your students believe that rules are there to be broken*
46	I prefer to stand back from a situation and consider all the perspectives *Do your student prefer to stand back from a situation and consider all the perspectives*
47	I can often see inconsistencies and weaknesses in other people's arguments *Do your students often see inconsistencies and weaknesses in other people's arguments*
48	On balance I talk more than I listen *Do your students talk more than they listen*
49	I can often see better, more practical ways to get things done *Do your students often see better, more practical ways to get things done*
50	I think written reports should be short and to the point *Do your students believe that written reports should be short and to the point*
51	I believe that rational, logical thinking should win the day

	Do your students believe that rational, logical thinking should win the day
52	I tend to discuss specific things rather than engaging in social discussion *Do your students tend to discuss specific things rather than engaging in social discussion*
53	I like people to approach things realistically rather than theoretically *Do your students like to approach things realistically rather than theoretically*
54	In discussions I get impatient with irrelevancies and digressions *Do your students get impatient with irrelevancies and digressions*
55	If I have a report to write I tend to produce lots of drafts before settling on the final version *When writing reports do your students tend to produce lots of drafts before settling on the final version*
56	I am keen to try things out to see if they work in practice. *Are your students keen to try things out to see if they work in practice*
57	I am keen to reach answers via a logical approach. *Are your students keen to reach answers via a logical approach*
58	I enjoy being the one that talks a lot. *Do your students enjoy being the one that talks a lot*
59	In discussions I often find I am the realist, keeping to the point and avoiding wild speculations *In discussions do your students appear to be realists, keeping to the point and avoiding wild speculations*
60	I like to ponder many alternatives before making up my mind. *Do your students like to ponder many alternatives before making up their minds.*
61	In discussions with people I often find I am the most dispassionate and objective *In discussions are your students often dispassionate and objective*
62	In discussions I am likely to adopt a 'low profile' rather than to take the lead and do most of the talking. *In discussions are your students likely to adopt a 'low profile' rather than to take the lead and do most of the talking*
63	I like to be able to relate current actions to a longer term bigger picture *Do your students like to be able to relate current actions to a longer term bigger picture*
64	When things go wrong I am happy to shrug it off and 'put it down to experience' *When things go wrong are your students happy to shrug it off and 'put it down to experience'.*
65	I tend to reject wild, spontaneous ideas as being impractical *Do your students tend to reject wild, spontaneous ideas as being impractical*
66	Its best to think carefully before taking action *Do your students think carefully before taking action*
67	On balance I do the listening rather than the talking *Do your students do the listening rather than the talking*
68	I tend to be tough on people who find it difficult to adopt a logical approach *Are your students tough on people who find it difficult to adopt a logical approach*
69	Most times I believe the end justifies the means Do your students believe the end justifies the mean3
70	I don't mind hurting people's feelings as long as the job gets done

	Do your students mind hurting people's feelings as long as the job gets done
71	I find the formality of having specific objectives and plans stifling *Do your students find the formality of having specific objectives and plans stifling*
72	I'm usually one of the people who puts life into a party *Are your students usually the people who put life into a party*
73	I do whatever is expedient to get the job done *Do your students do whatever is expedient to get the job done*
74	I quickly get bored with methodical, detailed work *Do your students quickly get bored with methodical, detailed work*
75	I am keen on exploring the basic assumptions, principles and theories underpinning things and events. *Are your students keen on exploring the basic assumptions, principles and theories underpinning things and events.*
76	I am always interested to find out what people think *Are your students always interested to find out what people think*
77	I like meetings to be run on methodical lines, sticking to a laid down agenda, etc. *Do your students like meetings to be run on methodical lines, sticking to a laid down agenda, etc.*
78	I steer clear of subjective or ambiguous topics *Do your students steer clear of subjective or ambiguous topic*
79	I enjoy the drama and excitement of a crisis situation *Do your students enjoy the drama and excitement of a crisis situation*
80	People often find me insensitive to their feelings *Are your students insensitive to others' feelings*

OBSERVATIONAL CHECKLIST

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT
Room Size
Lighting
Air-conditioning/ventilation [stuffy, cold, hot, etc]
Position of seating
Position of doors [at front/back/side]
Equipment
Noise level [does room echo, street noise, air-con noise etc]

TRAFFIC FLOW
Where students sit [front or back]
Disruption from late comers [squeaky doors etc]
Access to handouts
Number of attendance [compared to enrollment]
When material is handed out [beginning or end]

ACTIVITIES
Board material
Teacher's interaction [when handing out materials etc]

BEGINNING
Is there a beginning or does it just start?
Does the beginning encourage the audience make and them feel welcome?

MAIN EVENT
Outline of what will be accomplished in the class
Is the lecture easy to follow?
Are there any distinct sessions?
Are there clear transitions between sections?
Are points summarized?
Is the lecture material read?
Are notes used?

INTERACTION WITH AUDIENCE
Eye contact? Reading from board work without reference to audience?
Encourages questions? When? How? Is sufficient time allowed?
How are questions handled?
Can everyone hear all questions?
Are the answers clear?
Are questions from students treated seriously or as interruptions?
Is the interaction continuous/frequent/occasional/rare?
How many questions?

VOICE
Is the teachers' voice clear/loud enough for the room?

Adapted from an Observational Checklist created by Tollefson (1993) for the office of Educational Development, University of Berkley.

Gaebriella Wilkins
2006

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONNAIRE
ABOUT THE RESEARCH

A follow up questionnaire was used to help ascertain reliability of students' opinions on the overall research process and its objectives. The Questionnaire was distributed to 50 students. Students were asked to specify on a the extent to which they agreed with the following statements:

1 – Agree, 2 - Partially Agree, 3 – Do not agree

Follow up questions	**1 – 3**
I felt able to complete the questionnaire freely and honestly.	
I believe that the questionnaires captured key concerns.	
I was able to speak freely on whatever I had in mind during the interview.	
I feel that attending the interview has been an enjoyable experience for me.	
I dare not say what I truthfully think because I am worried that my answers may be disclosed to others.	
I felt intimidated by the presence of others during the observation sessions.	
I dare not say what I truthfully think because I am worried about the reactions of others to my comments.	
I think that The Academy should hold more discussion sessions of this sort for students to express their feelings and concerns about their education.	
I think that the information gathered from the questionnaires should be made available to our teachers.	
I think that the information gathered from the observation sessions should be made available to our teachers.	
I welcome such a research to contribute to the improvement of the teaching and learning environment at The Academy,	
Do you feel The Academy has sufficient channels for students to voice their opinions on matters relating to teaching and learning. Did you enjoy your involvement in this research.	
Do you feel motivated by the discussions?	

TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS' LEARNING STYLES

Results of Teachers Expectations of Students Learning Styles					
	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E
Activist	2,4,5,6,9	3,7	8	1	
Reflector		2,9	5,7,8	1,3,6	4
Theorist		4,5,9	1,2,5,6	3,7,8	
Pragmatist		8,9	4,6,7	1,2	

Band A	Very strong preference
Band B	Strong preference
Band C	Moderate preference
Band D	Low preference
Band E	Very low preference

Adapted from The Learning Styles Questionnaire designed by Honey & Mumford

Putonghua and Chinese Language Courses On Offer in 1998 / 1999   **Appendix 5**

Course		Required	Elective	No. of Classes	Average Class Size
LGPU0101-02 Putonghua	(2/2 credits)	Diploma Year 1		2	21
LGPU0201-02 Putonghua	(2/2 credits)	Diploma Year 2		2	12
LGPU0109-10 Chinese Language I - II	(2/2 credits)	Diploma Year 1	Diploma Year 2	5	17
LGPU1103-04 Chinese Language III - IV	(2/2 credits)	Degree Year 1	Advanced Diploma Year 1	2	21
LGPU1201-02 Advanced Putonghua	(2/2 credits)	Degree Year 3		1	16

English Language Courses On Offer in 1998 / 1999

Course		Required	Elective	No. of Classes	Average Class Size
LGEN0109-10 Fundamentals of English Communication I - II	(2/2 credits)	Diploma Year 1		8	16
LGEN0209-10 Fundamentals of English Communication III - IV	(2/2 credits)	Diploma Year 2		11	16
LGEN0107-08 Elementary English I - II	(2/2 credits)	Diploma Year 1		1	20
LGEN0207-08 Elementary English III - IV	(2/2 credits)	Diploma Year 2		1	13
LGEN0205-06 Communication for Technical Arts I - II	(2/2 credits)	Diploma Year 2		3	19
LGEN1103-04 Post-Elementary English I - II	(2/2 credits)	Advanced Diploma Year 1		1	11
LGEN1203-04 Post-Elementary English III - IV	(2/2 credits)	Advanced Diploma Year 2		1	11
LGEN1105-06 English Communication I - II	(2/2 credits)	Degree Year 1	Advanced Diploma Year 1	7	17
GEN1205-06 English Communication III - IV	(2/2 credits)	Degree Year 2	Advanced Diploma Year 2	6	16

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