

Corrective actions for indecisive behaviour of Foundation Phase learners during art activities

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**Corrective actions for indecisive behaviour of
Foundation Phase learners during art activities**

by

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MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS

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SUMMARY

The Foundation Phase in education provides the primary building blocks for young learners' fundamental intellectual, social, physical and emotional basis of development. Holistic development is critical during the early years of the emergent learner's life. Research has shown that it is imperative for young learners to make choices of their own accord, as room for independent decision making affords them the right to a "voice" and the opportunity to raise their own opinions which can contribute incrementally to their educational development.

Exercising personal choices demands self-confidence and resolution. Indecisiveness implies a lack of taking a stance at all, as passive learners who constantly vacillate cannot succeed in accomplishing the task at hand. Various internal and external factors contribute to young learners' indecisive behaviour and this, in turn, leads to a lack of self-confidence and fear. One of the main external factors identified is the child-rearing style of caregivers and parents. When learners experience fear and a lack of self-confidence, their educational experiences are also negatively impacted and therefore holistic development cannot take place.

Research has indicated that visual art activities benefit young learners tremendously as they endow the learners with a more relaxed approach during activities due to the enjoyable character thereof. The focus in this study is consequently on rectifying young learners' indecisiveness during visual art activities. All young learners dispose of the inherent potential to be creative and to express themselves through engaging with artwork, but when they lack self-confidence, they will be overcome with fear, hesitation and indecision. Social interaction as teaching strategy, as proposed by Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) supports learners who have not yet reached their full potential, therefore group work can be introduced where a decisive learner can support indecisive peers to gain self-confidence, giving rise to a more enterprising and venturesome approach. (Van der Veer, 2007: 114–115; Newman & Holzman, 1993: 67).

Key words:

- Creativity
- Visual arts
- Indecisiveness
- Child-rearing styles
- Foundation Phase
- CAPS
- Self-confidence
- Social development
- Zone of proximal development (ZPD)
- Choices

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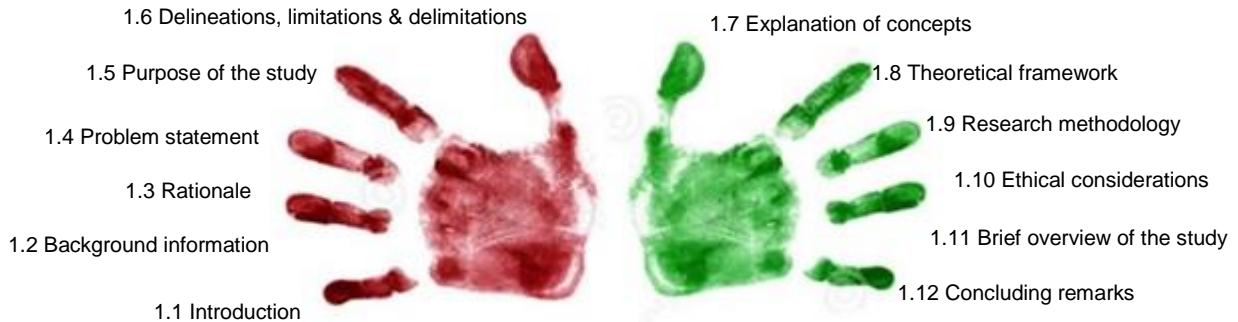
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CHAPTER 1 Introduction and orientation



1.1 INTRODUCTION

“Have blind faith in what you want to achieve, and it will give you the strength to achieve it” as quoted by Alexis Carrel in Ummerkutty (2005: 2), summarises my intentions with this study and also covers my dream for every young learner in education. During my few years as an educator of young learners in the Foundation Phase, I came to the realisation that a lot of learners enter the classrooms as indecisive learners. They desperately needed support to overcome this indecisiveness as it exerted an influence on their education in general. When learners are faced with choices that they have to make on their own, some of them often find it difficult and overwhelming (Patalano & LeClair, 2011: 163).

As an educator I observed the hesitance and lack of confidence in young learners when confronted with the challenge of making their own choices during the visual arts periods. They were often battling with a decision to start immediately working on the assignment given to them. I often heard phrases such as: *“I can’t do it”*, *“I don’t know how to do it”*, *“I don’t know what materials to use”* or *“I don’t know what to make”*. I realised that this indecision had to be addressed and the main cause had to be determined in order to assist the learners to become more resolute in their approaches to achieve in their work. I had to launch an in-depth investigation to probe into the root of the problem. Consequently, this study was aimed at investigating young learners’ indecisiveness during visual arts.



Chapter 1 provides an overview of the study. A brief background permits an understanding of how this study came to exist.

1.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Despite the new wave of constructivist thought with its advocacy for a learner-centred approach in education, many countries nowadays still have difficulty in allowing young learners to make their own choices in the classroom (Kanyal & Cooper, 2010: 3609). Kanyal and Cooper (2010: 3611) further maintain that many educators do not understand where young learners' ideas come from and forget that these learners themselves also hold the key to their own education. As an educator myself, a simple class lesson sparked off a major interest and gave rise to the idea of doing research on indecisive learner behaviour as focal point for this research study.

A few years ago the school where I was working at the time, managed to obtain a stuffed lion from a nature reserve in order to encourage learners to understand and conserve nature and its animals (see figure 1.1). The learners were allowed to touch the lion and could even sit on top of it.



The learners could touch and feel the lion.



The learners could even sit on top of the lion and get a "bird's eye view" from that angle.

Figure 1.1 Learners engaging with a stuffed male lion



This was a lesson incorporating a wild animal from a natural environment, where it could roam freely in nature far beyond the parameters of the classroom walls. Exposing the learners to authentic animals, even if obtained from a taxidermist, can also plant the seed of nature conservation. I therefore decided to approach the artwork from a different angle by merging nature conservation and art: I gave the learners different boxes containing a variety of art materials to choose from. The instruction was to create a lion, but they were allowed to choose *which* art materials they wanted to use and *how* they wanted to create their lion. Figure 1.2 depicts the process of familiarising the learners with art materials and reveals how they went about to create their pictures according to their liking. The final product was then displayed and appreciated. Each learner's artwork was created and proved a unique interpretation of the instructions.

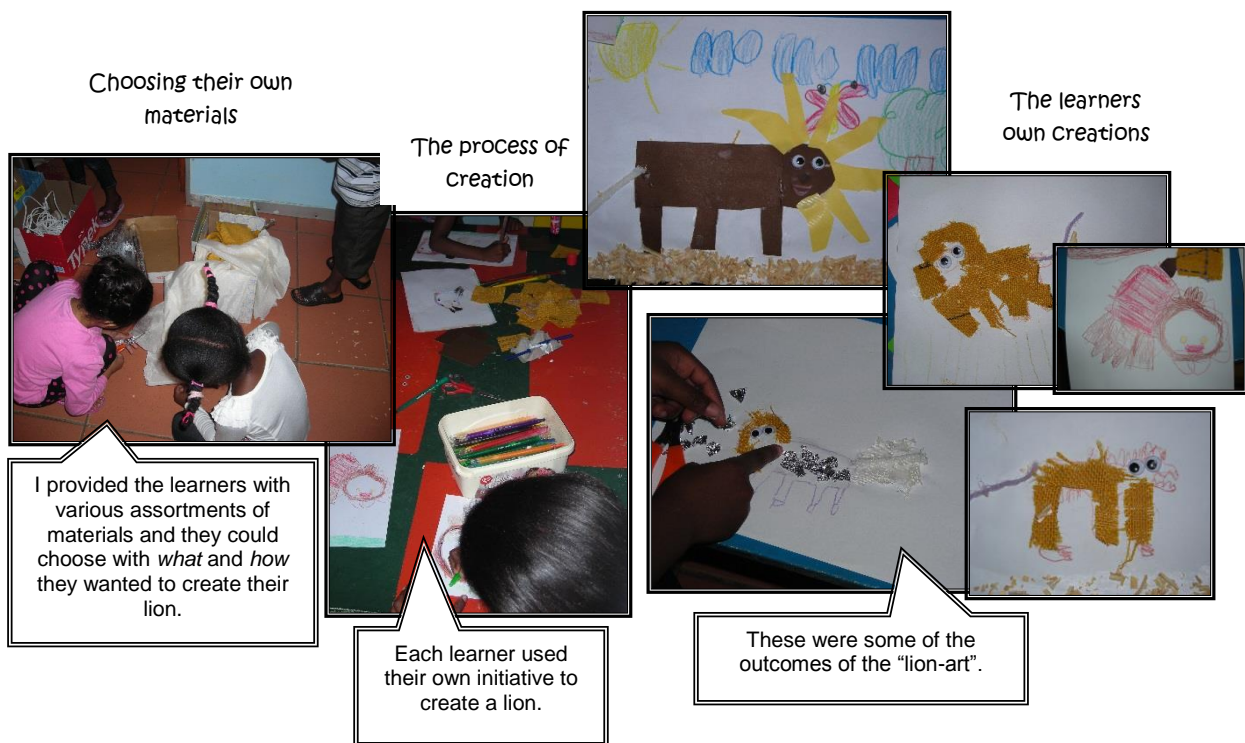


Figure 1.2 The process of choosing materials and deciding how they want to create their lion



I gained new insight into how young learners approached artwork on their level. I witnessed their abilities when they were allowed to make own choices with regard to their artwork and I observed the excitement and creativity emanating from the personal freedom when responding. I was also fascinated by the less confident learners who found it difficult to choose their material and to make decisions with regard to their own designs and choice of material. This indecision and frustration of the initially less successful learners, prompted me to determine the main reasons for their behaviour. The observation of hesitant learners engaged in their tasks while creating and discovering new insights, inspired me to launch a more comprehensive investigation of learner decision making and learner behaviour. The thrust of this dissertation covers the factors impacting slow and hesitant decision making when it comes to execution of a given task.

1.3 RATIONALE

I have been working with grade R learners for a number of years and I have noticed how easy indecisiveness can cause a lack of self-confidence. Boone, (2007: 2) states that learners' artwork often resembles an adult's input so that the work looks physically very attractive, but during the whole process, the learners themselves have not gained new knowledge, experiences or development. The children are therefore bereaved of the opportunity to learn by doing themselves, as their initiative to be creative is curbed by prescriptive adults.

Although teacher-directed work as discussed by Schirrmacher (2006: 227) and teacher directed instruction as a teaching strategy have been recognised to have a place in teaching when guiding learners in the process of working with information (Killen, 2010: 125), the modern constructivist approach of learner centred engagement by Vygotsky holds water (Wessels, 2010: 3). The role of the educator as caretaker to encourage social interaction is paramount. As a caretaker, I observed that learners displayed a sincere need to express themselves. Therefore I gave my learners choices with regard to their artwork, in order for them to gain self-confidence and knowledge as well as to explore, experiment and use their imagination.



During my four and a half years as a Grade R educator, I observed numerous learners engaged in art activities and wondered why some learners struggle to get started. Section 1.2 serves as an example: We had a real, stuffed lion at the school, which the learners could look at, touch and even sit on. I provided the learners with different materials afterwards and asked them to create a lion with any of the materials that I have laid out for them to use. Although most of the learners immediately jumped at the opportunity and could not wait to get started, there were, however, a few learners who were hesitant to start. I suspected that there were certain inhibitory factors that prevented them to make choices.

Through my own experience in my classroom, especially during times when the learners participate in artwork, I have noticed that learners gain more self-confidence when I take a step backwards and allow them to make their own choices. These involve basic choices, for example allowing them to decide which materials they wanted to use to complete a picture or whether they wanted to make their picture landscape or portrait format.

If allowing choices can have such an impact on learners, it made me wonder whether certain factors, such as background, family structure and child rearing approaches, could determine the child's ability or inability to make choices during lesson times at school. For the purpose of this study, choice making in the subject area visual arts was explored, because through exercising choices, factors could arise that may inhibit this process and therefore impede the emotional development and response of the child. In this regard Edwards (2005: 77) maintains that when learners are actively involved by exploring and experiencing themselves, they not only learn more through constructing their own knowledge but will also display courage to "re-visit" their learning process, in other words, they reflect upon their learning.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Foundation Phase of emergent learners, is the phase where the "building blocks" of their lives are established (Gordon & Browne, 2008: 9). When some of



these building blocks are missing, these young learners will, in one way or another, experience flaws in their lives. Experience has taught me that young learners, with a lot of self-confidence, learn with a lot more ease in school as opposed to learners with a lack of self-confidence. As an educator, I prefer giving learners basic choices inside the classroom, because I found that more freedom to choose build their self-confidence. Iyengar and Lepper (1999: 349) assert that when learners are allowed to make choices, it creates more motivated and confident learners that perform better in school. For the purpose of this study, I decided to focus on learners exercising choices when engaged with their artwork where they are allowed to choose *how* and with *what* they want to create their artwork. Indecisive behaviour as part of decision making will also be addressed.

According to Patalano and LeClair (2011: 163) indecisiveness refers to learners' uncertainty when they are faced with choices. Indecisiveness poses a problem for young learners, the way I have experienced it in Foundation Phase, because it divulges fear and anxiety and these in turn lead to underachievement in the learners' education (Pretorius, 1998: 210). Boone (2007: 1) regards participating in the realm of art as a good starting point for learners in the Foundation Phase to learn to exercise their own choices. These choices need not be complicated but involve choices with regard to their own artwork in a classroom situation where they feel at ease. An example of such choices could be anything from choosing the colour they want to make the "house", to choosing whether they want to use string, wood shavings, newspaper or pieces of sponge to create hair for their "person". Kanyal and Cooper (2012: 3605) maintain that when learners make choices in a classroom, it contributes to insightful education as well as healthy self-confidence.

The South African government schools use the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document. According to CAPS (2011: 22) the allocated time for visual arts per week is only one hour and as an educator I do not believe that it is adequate for young learners who express themselves through creativity. Mayesky (2006: 11) asserts that an environment where learners can work at a desirable pace allows learners to become more decisive and creative learners. A lot of research has been done on adolescent and high school pupils' indecisiveness, but not much on



young learners' indecisiveness. Therefore the following research questions were formulated for this study:

1.4.1 Primary research question

Why do some Foundation Phase learners experience indecisive behaviour during visual arts activities?

1.4.2 Secondary research questions

- What are the theoretical insights concerning indecisive behaviour during visual arts activities?
- What are the curriculum requirements for visual arts in the Foundation Phase, grade R?
- Which contextual and dispositional factors play a role in inhibiting or encouraging learners to make own choices with regard to their own artwork?
- What corrective measures can be taken to overcome indecisive behaviour?

The aim of this study was therefore to determine factors that inhibit Foundation Phase learners to make own choices with regard to their artwork. The identification of such factors could serve as the basis to devise guidelines and corrective actions for Foundation Phase educators to assist learners when they struggle to show initiative, lack of creativity or lack of self-confidence.

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to look at factors that might contribute to learners' indecisiveness during visual arts activities. Once these factors were determined, it would provide perspective and make it easier for the educator to support the learners accordingly. It was therefore also important to look at corrective actions that could be taken to support learners with indecisive behaviour, because this could support educators in the future when they are faced with learners' indecisiveness in



the classroom. Creativity forms a direct contrast with indecisive behaviour where the child displays a lack of self-confidence to make choices during activities performed in the visual arts classroom. I have consulted various sources in order to understand the topic of interest in my endeavour to broaden my perspective and interpret the data collected.

1.6 DELINEATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

Delineations, limitations and delimitations are mentioned in order to explain to readers *why* the study covers certain things and others not, but also to clarify the “boundaries” of the study (White, 2011: 241; Hofstee, 2006: 87).

1.6.1 The delineations of the study

Delineations of a study, are there to support the researcher by explaining to the readers why you are not responsible for doing A, B and C (Hofstee, 2006: 87).

Firstly, I focused my attention for this research study on Grade R learners (five to six year olds) only and not that of other ages, because they were the age group I taught. It was easier to gain their confidence and they were already familiar with me as their teacher. They might have reacted differently to an outsider than to a person whom they already knew.

Secondly, I did not gather more information after about four and a half months, because I already had adequate data and all my research questions were already answered by that time.

1.6.2 The limitations of the study

White (2011: 241) maintains that the limitations of a study are the influences which are beyond the control of the researcher and which could be a threat to the validation of the study.



Firstly, I only had the time inside the classroom to personally gather data relevant to the study. I had to rely on the answers of the parents with regard to how their learners were at home.

Secondly, during the interviews with the parents, they chose the amount of information they wanted to share with me themselves.

Thirdly, the data that I retrieved from this study were applicable to young learners between the ages of five and six years. It is possible that the same results would surface if the same study is done with learners younger or older than the participants for this study, but I could not say that with certainty, as I have only focused on five to six-year-olds.

1.6.3 The delimitations of the study

Delimitations of a study refers, figuratively, to the parameters that are set to one's study based on the choices the researcher made to set them (White, 2011: 241). The reason for this is to guide readers through the study itself so that they know and understand how the study is grounded.

Firstly, although the title speaks of Foundation Phase learners, this study and the literature focused only on Grade R learners *in* the Foundation Phase. These learners are between the ages of five and six years old. For this reason, it gave me, as the researcher, an enriched perspective on their developmental areas, but also of the vulnerability of such young learners' development (Pucket & Black, 1992: 507).

Secondly, this study did not consider young learners' own choices in every aspect of their lives, but only their own choices made during visual art activities in the classroom. Other areas apart from visual arts are beyond the scope of this study as it would have been very overwhelming for me as a researcher and the participants to have looked at making choices outside the school environment or making of choices during outside-play time. Visual arts is an area that most young learners are accustomed to and because it is such a powerful area to contribute to their holistic



development (Henning, 2011: 159) the decision to keep to visual arts as such, seemed feasible.

Thirdly, I decided on a qualitative approach for this study and not a quantitative approach. The characteristics of a qualitative approach (see section 3.2.2) ideally fitted with the study itself and allowed for a lot of creativity within the chapters itself.

Lastly, as a Grade R educator, I wanted to be a participant-observer where I could be a researcher as well as the learners' educator. This allowed the learners to feel comfortable around me as their educator as well as a researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 350). The learners did at no point react or perform differently to me just because I was a researcher as well.

1.7 EXPLANATION OF CONCEPTS

It is important to define concepts that may not be clear to the reader and how they feature in a particular research study (Hofstee, 2009: 88). The following concepts will arise during this paper on numerous occasions, and Chapter 2 will elaborate on them, therefore detailed definitions are now given to understand how these concepts relate to the study:

1.7.1 Creativity in young learners

Mayer (2006: 4) describes *creativity* as the process when learners use their abilities, skills, motivation and attitudes to create or come up with novel ideas in order to reveal originality. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* describes creativity as follows: "When a person uses new ideas and their imagination to make something new out of the ordinary". Furthermore, Worthington (2005: 1) maintains that creativity has its roots in the curiosity of learners when they create and experiment, and Sand (2002: 2) adds that creativity exists from within individuals when they make use of everyday knowledge and turn it into something new. For the purpose of this study, creativity will refer to learners' ability to make choices in visual arts. Creativity forms a direct contrast with indecisive behaviour where the child



displays a lack of self-confidence to make choices during activities performed in the visual arts classroom.

1.7.2 Visual arts in the Foundation Phase

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines *Art* as the process in which a person makes use of drawing, painting or sculpture to “express their ideas and feelings”. Art is depicted as a physical activity that entails actions such as painting, sculpting with clay, cutting, pasting and drawing (Gordon & Browne, 2008: 574). Visual arts as a subject embraces many elements such as: shape, colour, lines, design, texture and space to make up a work of art (Westraadt, 2007: 2). Furthermore, the South African Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS, 2011: 9) mentions that visual arts has a bipartite division viz.: two dimensional art, embracing any activity on a flat surface such as painting or drawing and three dimensional art that develops learners’ orientation in their immediate space, for example, sculpting or construction. Learners who are engaged in visual arts, benefit whole-heartedly because they develop holistically and their confidence levels are enhanced (Mayesky, 2006: 38).

1.7.3 Indecisiveness of young learners

Indecisiveness is the uncertainty that an individual faces when allowed to make choices (Patalano & LeClair, 2011: 163). I studied learners’ indecisiveness during visual art activities and came upon numerous learners that could not make their own choices and seemed hesitant to do so. There often seemed to be a lack of self-confidence when the learners had the opportunity to make their own choices (Runco, 2007: 299; Efland, 2002: 37).

1.7.4 Child-rearing styles

Child rearing styles are ways in which parents, educators and other adults influence a child’s life by means of communication, guiding them towards self-actualisation, and development of an identity (Pretorius, 1998: 9). Angenent has developed eight



child rearing styles: warm/cold parenting, dominant/permissive parenting, tolerant/intolerant parenting and involved/indifferent parenting (Angenent 1976: 59). According to Coulson, Oades and Stoyles (2012: 228) child-rearing styles pose to establish values, goals and meaning to a child's life.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of a theoretical framework is to interpret the empirical findings of a study, or in other words, it is a lens through which researchers look at their research (Anfara & Mertz, 2006: 192). This study used Lev Vygotsky's (1896-1934) theory of social development to interpret the empirical findings.

Vygotsky believes in the value of social interaction and claims that learners learn at their best when they actively engage with the learning content and interact with one another (Powell & Kalina, 2009: 245). This research study focused on young learners' indecisive behaviour during visual art activities and social interaction could support them to overcome this indecision. Vygotsky strongly believes in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which is the ability within learners that is in charge of how they learn (Powell & Kalina, 2009: 244; Gordon & Browne, 2008: 150).

According to Charlesworth and Lind (2007: 16) all learners have a certain level of capability, which is known as the emergent learners' *actual capability*. Charlesworth and Lind (2007: 16) further proclaim that with the necessary support from an adult or more capable peers, these learners could reach a higher potential, known as the learners' potential capability. The zone in between a young learner's actual capability and potential capability is the ZPD. It is in this zone where a learner's capability can be enriched. Scaffolding, according to Newman and Holzman (1993: 67) is the assistance one provides young learners to reach their potential capability. It is metaphorically seen as a bridge to cross over from the actual capability to the potential capability.

Group work in the classroom, could provide such scaffold for indecisive learners to reach their potential capability. According to MacNaughton and Williams (2004: 105)



there are various types of groupings which are all beneficial for five year old learners. There are informal, multi-age and mixed culture groups. The method of scaffolding is mostly temporary, because at a certain stage of the learning process, learners are able to do projects on their own and work independently (Coffey, 2009: 2).

Vygotsky focuses further on the social aspects of learners learning capabilities through the act called *social constructivism* (Liu & Matthews, 2005: 388). According to Charlesworth and Lind (2007: 15) social constructivism entails learners gaining new information from the environment in which they find themselves whilst interacting with one another. Young learners often engage with one another through conversing and sharing ideas. Therefore the classroom environment is ideal for scaffolding to take place. The environment offers the assistance of an educator as well as that of more capable peers, who can support indecisive learners during visual art activities. Such support and guidance could not only lead indecisive learners to their potential capabilities, but could also support them to gain confidence to explore the environment.

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The following section clarifies the research methodology used in this study. Chapter 3 elaborates further on the methodology itself.

1.9.1 Research design

The research design embraces the elements within the approach that were used to conduct research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 23).

1.9.1.1 Paradigm

A paradigm is a mind-set of investigating and understanding the different views and its connection with reality (Shkedi, 2005: 1). The interpretivist paradigm was used for this research study. The word *interpretation* can be defined as a way of



understanding human meanings and their behaviour, without intervening in the process (Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, 2009: 487; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007: 20). The interpretation also relies heavily on the hermeneutics which are the interpretation of theory and text (Maree, 2007: 58).

The interpretivist paradigm was ideally suited for this study because observations, which were one of my data collection methods, occurred in a natural setting and a reflective process occurred routinely. It also allowed me to recognise each participant as a unique individual within their natural environment inside the classroom.

1.9.1.2 Research approach

A qualitative research approach, involving case studies, was used for this research study. According to Creswell (2008: 53) and Maree (2007: 257) qualitative research focuses on a specific phenomenon through non-numerical means. This research explored factors that contributed to young learners' indecisiveness and what corrective action to take to overcome indecisiveness.

The qualitative approach allowed me to conduct research in the young learners' natural setting, which was the classroom. The subjective methods of collecting data from the participants gave me a lot of insight to indecisive behaviour as well as the factors that contribute to indecisiveness (cf. Maree, 2007: 257).

1.9.1.3 Multiple case studies

Case study research follows ways which allow the researcher to look at an event or real-life phenomenon with the goal to discover why certain matters arise within the event (Maree, 2007: 75). This was ideal, as case studies allowed me to explore and understand the factors that influenced children's indecisive behaviour during visual arts. Instead of one case study, I made use of multiple cases to investigate the research question at hand: I identified one decisive Grade R learner and four indecisive Grade R learners. The reason for this was to see what contextual factors



influenced decisive behaviour as opposed to the role of contextual factors that influenced indecisive behaviour.

1.9.2 Research methods

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 8) the research methods describe where and how the research data was collected as well as a description of the process of the data analysis.

1.9.2.1 Research site and participants

A small private school, in a suburb of Pretoria, was the site where I conducted research. The school hosts children from different countries' embassies, but also children from in and around Pretoria with English as the main language of instruction. As a Grade R educator, I had access to a Grade R classroom where a sound relationship had already been established between my participants and me since we were familiar with each other. Permission from the principal was granted in order to do research at the school.

i) Grade R learners as participants

I made use of purposeful sampling to select the participants for this research study. Purposeful sampling is a method used to deliberately select participants who can provide rich data about the phenomenon to be researched (Creswell, 2008: 214). This qualitative research study involved multiple case studies, therefore I selected one decisive learner and four indecisive learners from the Grade R group.

The research was thoroughly explained to both the parents as well as the participants. A practical example was done on a parents' evening to demonstrate how the research was to take place (see section 3.3.1.2). To prevent favouritism, all the learners received an assent form, even though I only selected five particular participants (see Appendix B). The parents received consent forms (Appendix C). The research study occurred during the normal visual arts creative time, as described on the daily programme, therefore all learners had to partake in the



activities. The participants and their parents knew well in advance that they could withdraw from the research at any point of time.

ii) The parents as participants

The five learners' parents also served as participants as I conducted semi-structured interviews with them. This allowed me to investigate whether the learners' indecisiveness already started at home instead of just at school. The parents knew that I would record the interviews on a voice recorder, that the interviews would be transcribed and that their real names would not be used, but rather pseudonyms.

1.9.2.2 The role of the researcher

My role as a researcher, was that of a participant-observer. McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 350) imply that a participant-observer is not only a researcher but a participant as well. Being the learners' teacher, I was already present in the classroom with whom they were familiar, so the learners did not find it strange when I walked among them, whilst observing and communicating with them. Being a participant-observer allowed me to have spontaneous conversations with the learners which also led to data for the research study. In the letter of informed consent (Appendix C) the parents were informed of my dual role as a teacher as well as that of a researcher in the classroom and it was carefully explained that the children's education was still first priority and that my research would not in any way interfere with this.

1.9.2.3 Data collection

As the researcher I was able to collect reliable data in the learners' natural Grade R setting about the phenomenon that I investigated (Maree, 2007: 37). Observation and field notes, interviews, photographs and artefacts were the methods I used to gather reliable data:



i) Observation and field notes

As a participant-observer my role as participant allowed me to observe the participants in their natural setting. Creswell (2008: 221) maintains that observation is an act of observing others to gather information. I made use of an observational checklist to guide me with the observations (Appendix E). All observations were recorded in a journal named “field text entries” upon which I made personal reflections which I named “diary entries”. Hatch (2007: 143–144) proclaims that field notes might seem ineffective during the research process of collecting data, but that in the end, it could contribute immensely to the findings. The field notes did in fact contribute immensely to this research study.

ii) Interviews

McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 355) state that interviews are conversations, prompted by predetermined questions, by the researcher to gain knowledge about a certain problem. Some interviews with the learners were spontaneous conversations and although I had an interview guide, these conversations were natural without distracting them from their work. Individual open-ended interviews with the learners were done upon their completion of their artwork. A list of “addressed topics” guided these interviews (Appendix F). I used semi-structured interviews with the parents. Semi-structured interviews are predetermined questions but allow room for questions that were not determined beforehand (Maree, 2007: 87). These interviews filled in the gaps of what I observed in the classroom and gave me more insight on the learners’ home environment and whether that had an impact on their indecisiveness. I recorded interviews on digital audio tapes to help ensure that the children’s and the parents’ entire comprehensive feedback could be captured as to increase my understanding and interpretation of the information provided (Creswell, 2008: 228). The parents knew in advance that all raw data are kept in storage according to the policy requirements of the university for a period of approximately fifteen years.

iii) Photographs

Photographs are a type of audio-visual material that can be collected when observations are made (Maree, 2007: 257). I took multiple photographs of the



process when the learners created artwork. The photographs also proved to be valuable when observing the learners over a period of time to see if and how progression toward decisiveness took place. The learners were not bothered by the camera as photographs were routinely taken for internal use by the school, therefore they were used to being photographed. The parents were however assured that their children's privacy was of utmost concern and that no face would be recognisable in the photographs. Further photographs of the learners' artwork after completion were taken in order to derive further meaning from it.

iv) Artefacts

Artefacts encompass anything that captures a person's experience, feelings, knowledge and more (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 361). My observations were recorded in a reflective journal where I reflected on my feelings, ideas and suggestions. Further artefacts were the learners' artwork, as they also held clues to learners' indecisiveness.

1.9.2.4 Data analysis

Inductive data analysis was used for this study. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 367) inductive data analysis is when categories and patterns emerge from the coding of the data. They further maintain that the process of inductive analysis is an ongoing process where the researcher can "double check" or go back to the previous stage to rectify or refine the analysis. Some of my research data was analysed by hand as I found it easier and less confusing. Transcriptions from the interviews, observations, reflective journals and photographs were all written by hand but then typed onto the computer. Even though I did the coding by hand, it was then also captured on computer. Inductive data analysis left room for me to return to the research site if more data was required, but after approximately four and a half months in the classroom I had adequate data.



1.9.2.5 Validation of the findings

Validation of data are done through various techniques in order to assure that the findings are accurate and credible (Creswell, 2008: 266). Trustworthiness assured my research to be true, honest and reliable (Maree, 2007: 80). The following points explain the trustworthiness of my research:

i) Transferability

Transferability is when readers can use my data results and use them in other contexts (Willis, 2007: 222). I believe that my research contained valuable significance that could be tried in other classroom settings as well as other learning areas, activities or subjects other than visual arts.

ii) Credibility

According to White (2011: 236) there are numerous ways to ensure credibility: The data that I gathered through observations, reflective journal, photographs and interviews were compared. The parents were notified that they were allowed to look at my research at any point of the study. Photographs were routinely taken for the purpose of the school, therefore the learners were used to being photographed and it did not come as something new. Through my reflective journal I was able to recognise any biases there could have been.

iii) Dependability and conformability

According to White (2011: 235) dependability is complemented by conformability. Conformability is when the researcher's data findings can be supported by readings and investigations of researchers who did similar studies (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Razavieh, 2010: 638). Chapter 2 offers a broad selection of readings on all the particular facets of this study.

iv) Triangulation

Triangulation is an approach that ensures validity and to establish trustworthiness of the data that was found through means of various methods of collecting data (Marvasti, 2004: 114). Observations, my reflective journal, photographs and



interviews were all ways through which I collected data and the data were then cross-validated (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 374).

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ethical considerations for this study were of utmost importance as the participants were under the age of 18 years (Hedges, 2001: 3). I followed the correct procedures of the University of Pretoria to obtain ethical clearance. My application was revised by an ethics committee and upon approval, an ethical clearance certificate was granted (**REFERENCE: EC 13/08/01** – See Appendix H).

The school where research was conducted was a private institution, I had to ask written consent from the principal to conduct research (see Appendix A). The parents had to give verbal and written consent in order for me to do research with their children (Appendix C). The learners themselves had to give assent and because they were too young to read the assent form, I created it in such a way so that the participants could look at visual images whilst explaining the research to them on their level of understanding (Appendix B). Both the parents and their children were informed that they could withdraw from the research process at any time. They children were assured that their children as well as their own identity and privacy would be protected by means of using pseudonyms and that no child's face would be recognisable in photographs in order to maintain their privacy.

1.11 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Below is a brief overview of what to expect in each chapter. Every chapter is discussed in detail according to this overview:

1.11.1 Chapter 1 – Introduction and orientation to the study



Chapter 1 gives a brief overview and introduction to the study. It explains the origin of the study, rationale, the problems, the aims



as well as the delineations, limitations and delimitations. The explanation of concepts and underlying assumptions follow along with the overview of the chapters.

1.11.2 Chapter 2 – Theoretical framework and perspectives from literature



Chapter 2 consists of the theoretical framework as well as recent literature. The social development theory, of Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), served as a theoretical framework to support the research findings of this study. It is followed by various literature to explain young learners' home environment, their development, their creativity, visual arts and their choices. This literature created a foundation to understand the various concepts found in this study.

1.11.3 Chapter 3 – Research methodology



As one of the most important chapters of this study, Chapter 3 maps out the procedures of the research. The research approach, design and data collection methods are discussed in detail followed by the ethical considerations. Lastly, the data analysis procedure and interpretation is provided.

1.11.4 Chapter 4 – Data analysis and research findings



The data analysis and research findings were split into two separate chapters. Chapter 4 presents the data after analysis. Interviews with the parents, spontaneous conversations with the learners, photographs and observations as well as a reflective journal allowed for very interesting and exciting data. The study was a multiple case study and therefore the data are also presented in that manner.

1.11.5 Chapter 5 – Interpretation of research findings



My personal observation and the research findings were interpreted. The interpretations were interconnected with that of the literature from



Chapter 2 to compare the findings with that of previous research. Vygotsky's theory on Social Development also posed as a lens through which my research findings are interpreted.

1.11.6 Chapter 6 – Summary, conclusions and recommendations



Concluding this research study, Chapter 6 provides a brief summary of the perspectives from literature as well as my research findings and interpretation. Conclusions are drawn by answering the main research question and the secondary questions. Finally, recommendations for parents, educators, policies and further research are mentioned.

1.12 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Chapter 1 introduced the research study. The background information, rationale, purpose of the study, the research questions and lastly, an overview of the chapters are given to provide an understanding of what is to follow in the upcoming chapters.

The next chapter, chapter 2, provides the perspectives mainly from recent literature. Firstly, the theoretical framework of Lev Vygotsky's (1896-1934) Social Development are explained, followed by literature on young learners' home environment, their development, creativity, visual arts and their choices.

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CHAPTER 2

Theoretical framework and perspectives



2.1 INTRODUCTION

The intention with the research study was to discover factors that could possibly influence young learners' indecisiveness and to see what corrective actions can be taken to support this indecisive behaviour. Academic readings gave me insight into young learners' home environment, their development, how creativity, visual arts and own choice-making contribute to the lives of young learners, with the hope that it would support my own research findings.

Chapter 2 firstly offers the theoretical framework where I look at the social developmental theory of Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934). It helped me to maintain a conceptual focus as it was the lens through which I envisaged the study. This framework enabled me to interpret the findings that I accumulated whilst in the Grade R classroom. The theory of Vygotsky assisted me to focus and direct my study and to help me understand the social setting in which learners gain new knowledge. It also supported the aim of this study which was to determine factors that inhibit Foundation Phase learners when making their own choices during visual arts.

Following the theoretical framework, are the perspectives from the literature that look at the main elements of the research questions in order to gain knowledge on what other researchers have explored. The overview relates to aspects of young learners' development, their creativity, the importance of visual arts, learners' choice-making and indecisiveness. It also includes comments on the current curriculum for South-



African schools and the time allocated for visual arts in the Foundation Phase as well as the importance of visual arts as a subject for young learners and how it contributes to learners' development through own choice-making (Koster, 2012: 5). The literature covers sources from earlier to recent research in order to gain insight on different as well as similar perspectives.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THIS STUDY

I start the chapter by explaining Vygotsky's (1896-1934) theory of social development to maintain a conceptual focus as it was the lens through which I did the study. Anfara and Mertz (2006: 192) explain that the function of a theoretical framework is to interpret the empirical findings of a study. The role of Vygotsky's (1896-1934) theory, as a theoretical framework, was to keep my focus to a point where I could concentrate on the importance of young learners' social behaviour and interaction with one another throughout their learning in an art environment in the Foundation Phase. It also made me understand the literature I have reviewed.

2.2.1 Vygotsky's Social Development Theory

Vygotsky (1896-1934), in Eloff and Ebersöhn (2004: 401) bases his theory of social development on the fact that a person's brain gets stimulated and developed from their environment and their social involvement with other people. His collected works focuses essentially on his theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as he believes that when learners are supported by an adult or a stronger peer, they can transfer from their actual developmental level to their potential capability (Knox & Stevens, 1993: 305). According to Vygotsky's theory on Social Development, knowledge is gained when social interaction among people occurs (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2004: 401). In other words, learners can gain new knowledge in a classroom setting when they share their experiences, knowledge and opinions with one another. Powell and Kalina (2009: 245) maintain that Vygotsky focuses on the value of social interaction and claims that learners learn at their best when they actively engage with the learning content and interact with one another. This interaction can be anything from shared knowledge when playing or working



alongside someone else to just talking about their experiences. Berger (2009: 253) quotes: “Vygotsky believed that every aspect of young learners’ cognitive development is embedded in a social context.”

During my experience as a Grade R Foundation Phase educator, I came to realise how important it is for learners to interact with one another. They do not only interact during play time, but also during times when they eat lunch, do work and participate in activities. As an educator, with the learners’ best interest at heart, I believe that learners benefit from making own choices in a classroom, where they can explore and discover various possibilities and many researchers have come to realise this phenomenon of learners making own choices. Many learners show indecisive behaviour, but it can be safely assumed that social interaction could support them to overcome this indecision. Therefore literature was consulted to provide answers for the questions I, as a researcher, had. Schiller and Einarsdottir (2009: 125) maintain that learners’ own choices contribute to their learning and knowledge. Gordon and Browne (2008: 295) further state that learners feel important when they are involved in their learning and that this instils self-confidence. The more confident learners are, the more independent they become (Berger, 2009: 278). This theory of social development of Vygotsky is deemed as best suited for my study as I have already noticed how aspects of his theory manifest in classroom practice.

When one looks at an environment, there usually are aspects within that environment that attract attention and stimulate curiosity which lead to exploration and investigation (Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev & Miller, 2003: 128). It is then through this experience that cognitive development is influenced because of the social interaction with others within a stimulating environment. As an educator myself, I have come to realise that the environment in which learners learn does not have to be a luxurious space, but that an environment with ordinary equipment and materials can serve just as well as an apt learning environment. Chaiklin (2003: 47) refers to the work of Vygotsky when asserting that there is a very distinct relationship between learners and their environment. Not only do the learners interact socially with one another, but they also interact with the material within the environment and these two combined, have an influence on learners’ cognitive development. Learners often



observe their peers when they work on an art project or activity. Through interaction with their peers and sharing ideas the young learners' knowledge is expanded (Isbell & Raines, 2003: 111).

Everything learners do, whether it is interacting with materials, or playing with one another, involves some kind of learning. Even when involved in problem solving, or thinking skills, some learners would not be able to grasp certain skills without the support of adults or more capable peers. In this regard Vygotsky strongly believes in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which according to Powel and Kalina (2009: 244) and Gordon and Browne (2008: 150), is the faculty within learners that is in charge of how they learn. The ZPD can be viewed as the zone of current level of knowledge of the emergent learner but with the help of an adult or more capable peers, their learning still might be able to reach a higher level (Charlesworth & Lind, 2007: 16). The following schematic illustration, Figure 2.1, explains this zone:

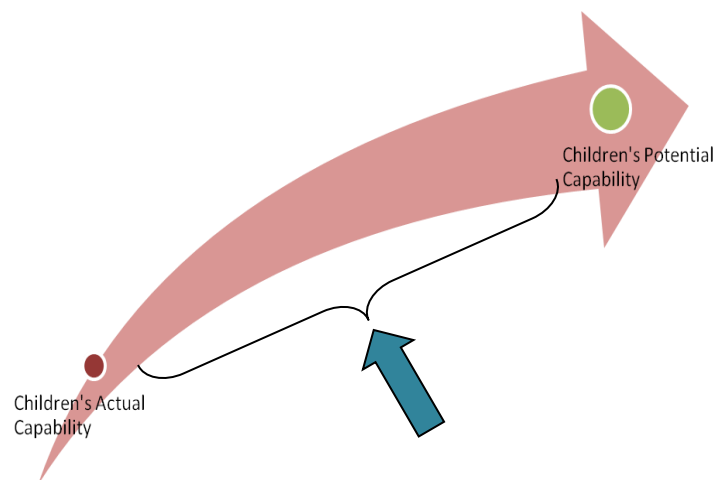


Figure 2.1: A schematic illustration of the Zone of Proximal Development

The area between the child's actual and potential capability is referred to as the Zone of Proximal Development and it is in this area that the potential development takes place with the assistance of more capable peers and adults (Kozulin *et al.* 2003: 41). All learners will have a level of capability and skills that they can do at the present time of their learning which Vygotsky refers to as learners' actual capability, but he is convinced that learners can reach a higher level, a potential they are capable to attain with the assistance of an adult (Charlesworth & Lind, 2007: 16). I



believe that as an educator, I can assist learners to reach their potential by allowing them to make their own choices and to support those choices with the support of a more capable peer.

Coffey (2009: 2) maintains that learners do not necessarily reach their full potential over night, but with constant support as well as experiences, they will do so in due time. Kozulin *et al.* (2003: 41) proclaim that there are no boundaries for a ZPD to form, and thus a ZPD can exist for any skill and type of learning that takes place. Harland (2003: 264) postulates that learners learn while exploring and experiencing and thus create their own ZPD. Consequently learners interact with their peers and teachers, who often lend a hand in their learning experience, whether it is to create a stimulating environment or to assist them in solving problems: This “assistance” is known as the process of *scaffolding* (Charlesworth & Lind, 2007: 16; Newman & Holzman, 1993: 67). The following schematic illustration (Figure 2.2) not only shows the Zone of Proximal Development, but it also shows that the process of scaffolding bridges the zone in order to reach the potential capability of a learner.

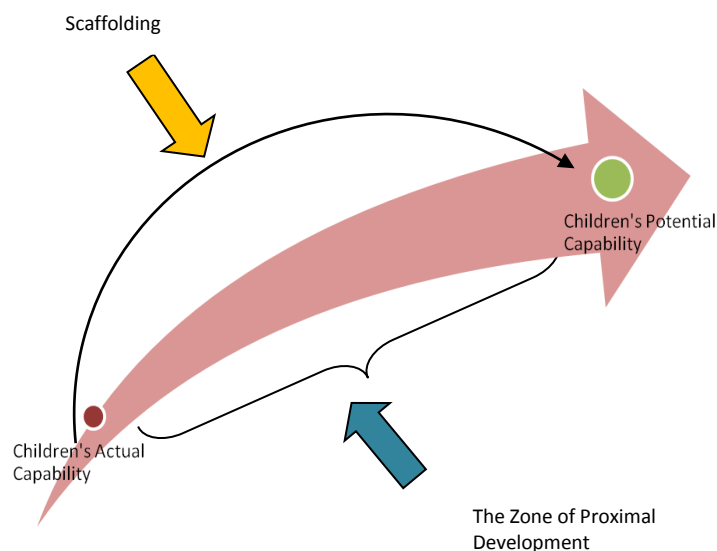


Figure 2.2: A schematic illustration of scaffolding

Berger (2009: 254) postulates that when learners cannot accomplish certain skills on their own they can be assisted by others who are more capable– this process is referred to as *scaffolding*. Scaffolding can be seen as a metaphor of a bridge where an adult or peers assist learners to go from their actual capability to their potential



capability (Newman & Holzman, 1993: 67). Van der Veer (2007: 114–115) describes the term further by alleging that it is a way of supporting a child to find solutions together as a member of a team.

The process of scaffolding goes hand in hand with the ZPD, because in order for learners to reach their potential capability, adults or more capable peers need to assist them or *scaffold* to bridge the ZPD (Powell & Kalina, 2009: 244). According to Berger (2009: 254) learners are very aware of each other and can provide scaffolding for one another, for example: When a struggling learner is sitting at a table between others, he/she looks around to see what the other learners do and can thus learn from them just through observing them. Coffey (2009: 2) further states that scaffolds are like building blocks which the educator builds upon and they enable learners to develop their ZPD and through the process learners are very likely to “internalise” and “externalise” the new knowledge (Newman & Holzman, 1993: 137). During visual arts activities (in the preschool context it is referred to art activities and not art classes) the involvement and support of an educator or a stronger peer can be of importance as it supports learners who become frustrated or fearful during the process (Fox & Schirmacher, 2012: 271). Working in groups alongside more capable peers could also provide such scaffolding.

MacNaughton and Williams (2004: 105) maintain that learners can be placed in different types of groups in order to provide such support of the scaffolding process. The different groupings are as follows:

- *Informal grouping*: The learners, themselves, decide the arrangement of the group members (MacNaughton & Williams, 2004: 105). Blatchford, Kutnick, Clark, MacIntyre & Baines (2001: 20–21) maintain that these informal groups often consist of friends choosing to be together in groups.
- *Multi-age grouping*: MacNaughton and Williams (2004: 105) describe this group as a group where the learners are mostly a year apart in age. In the grade R class, where this study took place, there were learners who were four years old turning five instead of five years old turning six. This is



because some parents want their children to start Grade one a year earlier and not in the year that they turn seven. The disadvantage of this type of grouping is that different age groups can have different needs and that an educator can struggle to keep up with them all (Wood, 1994: 2). This specific grouping, however, benefits preschool learners tremendously, because the more capable and older learners can support other learners with social, problem-solving and language skills (Winsler, 1993: 3). Another advantage is that this grouping works excellently with learners between five and six years of age which is the age of Grade R learners (Wood, 1994: 4).

- *Mixed culture groups:* According to MacNaughton and Williams (2004: 106) the benefit of such a group supports learners who struggle with a specific language because they interact with one another.

Boone (2007: 6) mentions that it is important for the educator not to interrupt the young learners' learning process by interfering too much during their art making process but only to support them. According to Fox and Schirmacher (2012: 54) observations from the teacher is an ideal way to notice where learners' current level of learning is and what aspects to challenge them with. The method of scaffolding is mostly temporary, because at a certain stage of the learning process, learners are able to do projects on their own and work independently (Coffey, 2009: 2). Having observed this process through practical experience has taught me that this scaffolding process can easily take place between learners without any intervention of an adult. Learners can easily learn from one another as evidence of socialising. Learners are curious beings and when they want to have answers for things that interest them, they will make a plan to find out through exploration (Berger, 2009: 253).

Social constructivism essentially generates a learning environment within the actual classroom environment where struggling learners can reach their potential capability.



2.2.2 Social Constructivism

The term “social constructivism” is derived from the concept “constructivism”. Constructivism entails learners gaining knowledge through concrete experiences within their direct environment (Powell & Kalina, 2009: 242; Huitt & Hummel, 2003: 4). Following is a practical example of constructivism inside the classroom during visual art activities: The learners were busy creating a three-dimensional artwork on the theme of “Transport”. Sandile (fictitious name) constructed his own car with waste materials but the wheels (made from lids) kept on falling off after using Ponal glue, so he decided to try pieces of Prestick. Through this art-making process, Sandile gained new knowledge through working with concrete materials and experiences in order to solve his problem.

Vygotsky focuses more on a social aspect of the learners gaining information within their environment (Liu & Matthews, 2005: 388). This is called *social constructivism*. Vygotsky believes that the environment contains many opportunities for learners to gain knowledge. He continues to say that learners interact with one another, share ideas and thus create new thoughts and knowledge (Charlesworth & Lind, 2007: 15; Kim, 2006: 3). Compare the following practical example of social constructivism in action: Naledi (fictitious name) is busy making a necklace for herself by threading coloured macaroni pieces on a string. Her friend Sarah (fictitious name) is sitting next to her also making a necklace and notices that Naledi struggles to thread the soft wool through the macaroni pieces and makes the suggestion that she ties the wool to a toothpick before threading it through. This is an example of how a learner constructs knowledge from interacting with another learner in an art environment.

According to Packer (2008: 3) activities or direct involvement with the environment is of great importance to learners because they do not only get to interact with the materials but also with one another. MacNaughton and Williams (2004: 21) maintain that although preschool learners socialise with their peers, they are still in need of support of an adult who can direct the learners’ social interactions. Socialising is important for learners to gain knowledge that could help them to reach their full



potential. Learners are natural socialisers that enjoy conversing and interacting with one another (Fox & Schirrmacher, 2012: 73).

In this study the focus is on the Social Development theory of Vygotsky (1896-1934) along with the Zone of Proximal Development in order to understand learners' indecisive behaviour in a visual arts environment better. The model below (see Figure 2.3) illustrates some important elements of the Social Development theory in this study:

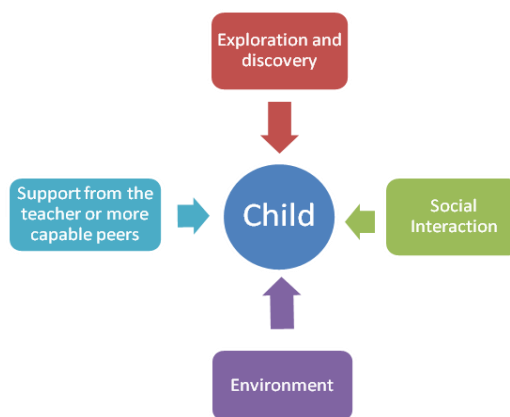


Figure 2.3: The elements of the Social Development Theory in this study

All learners grow up in an environment that contributes to their development, whether in a positive or negative way. An environment that is stable, safe and emotionally secure, allows for young learners to experience, discover and express themselves freely (Eisenberg, *et al.* In Sheffield Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers & Robinson, 2007: 368). The classroom environment can offer opportunities for social interaction to take place, where the teacher and more capable peers can support indecisive learners. This support could assist such learners to feel comfortable and confident and to explore within their environment.

As educational situations vary it is not to say that every learner will reach the same developmental outcomes than the learner sitting next to him in the classroom (Mayesky, 2006: 70). Although the art environment in the Grade R Foundation Phase class allows the same learning opportunities for all learners they may



experience the process of learning in a different way as each young learner is a unique individual (De Witt, 2009: 45).

2.3 PERSPECTIVES FROM LITERATURE ON THE IMPACT OF LEARNERS' CHOICE-MAKING DURING VISUAL ARTS IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE

The perspectives obtained from the literature review, cover the research and reading done by previous academics on particular academic topics (Hofstee, 2009: 91). The focus of this literature review will be on Foundation Phase learners' home environment, their brain development and will embrace a look at five and six-year-olds' developmental milestones. The study entails a look at young learners' ability to be creative as well as creativity in the classroom. For the purpose of this study it was necessary to look at the importance of visual arts in the Foundation Phase and how decisiveness as well as indecisiveness could play a vital role in young learners' education.

2.3.1 The environment in which young learners are raised

Everybody has some form of family in which they are raised according to their specific culture where generations of knowledge and beliefs are transferred (Maynard & Martini, 2005: 11). It is within these walls of a family context where a learning environment for learners is established (Maynard & Martini, 2005: 4). Parents are by all means, first and foremost, the most important role models and caregivers of their children. They establish an environment in which the child develops and learns as well as meet various challenges (Zijlstra, 2012: 25).

Child rearing styles are ways in which parents, teachers and other adults influence a child's life by means of communication, guiding them towards self-actualisation, and development of an identity (Pretorius, 1998: 9). Angenent has developed eight child rearing styles: warm/cold parenting, dominant/permissive parenting, tolerant/intolerant parenting and involved/indifferent parenting (Angenent, 1976: 59). Pretorius (1998: 61) elaborates on Angenent's child rearing model that focuses on



the “everyday rearing of the child.” According to Angenent (in Pretorius, 1998: 9) there are eight possible child rearing styles. The following figure depicts the eight child rearing styles:

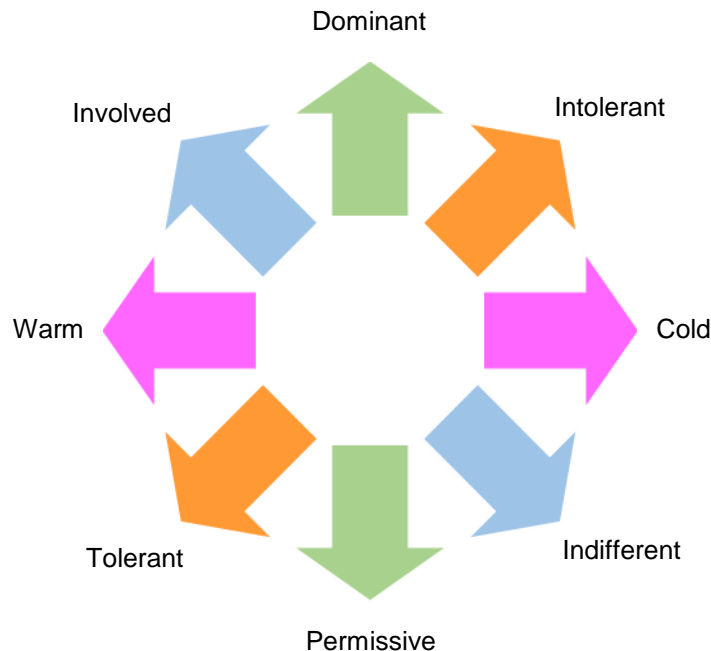


Figure 2.4: Angenent’s (1985) model of the eight child-rearing styles

The following eight child-rearing styles of Angenent are explained at hand of Figure 2.4 (Pretorius, 1998: 9):

❖ **Warm as opposed to cold parenting**

Parents, who fall under the category of “*warm parenting*”, often provide a loving environment, with an interest and involvement in the child’s life as opposed to the cold parents, who would often reject the child and build a wall between themselves and the child.

❖ **Dominant as opposed to permissive parenting**

Dominant parents are those who wish to have control over their children’s lives, set goals which *they* wish the children must reach and very often make use of punishment when the children do not meet these goals, as opposed to permissive parenting, where the parents allow their children to



be themselves. These parents have fewer rules and boundaries for the children, are less prescriptive and they love the children unconditionally.

❖ **Tolerant as opposed to intolerant parenting**

The tolerant parents are a combination of the warm as well as the permissive parents. The parents maintain a democratic parenthood and accept the child unconditionally, as opposed to the intolerant parents, who are a combination of a cold and dominant authoritarian in his/her approach towards the child. Demands set towards the children are very high and the relationship is characterised by a strong negative element.

❖ **Involved as opposed to indifferent parenting**

Parents who demonstrate involved parenting are often a combination of the warm and dominant style. It means that parents can set limits to a child but only because of their love towards the child. Sometimes this love, however, can be too much. The indifferent parent has a combination of cold and permissiveness, and therefore does not care about the child's needs. The parent will show selfishness and irresponsibility towards the child.

Every child grows up in a different environmental setting where various factors can contribute to their development, and where some are even lacking. According to Darling and Steinberg (1993: 487) research has shown that the various child-rearing styles emerge and exist according to the milieu they find themselves in. Cultural influences also contribute to the way parents raise their learners (Maynard & Martini, 2005: 15).

Buist, Deković and Prinzie (2013: 104) maintain that young learners need a stable and secure home environment with a loving family context in order to promote positive behaviour. Academic readings have indicated that negative family settings, in other words, settings where there is stressful and fearful situations, can have a negative influence on young learners' behaviour (Turner, Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2012: 210). If educators expect young learners to take in any new knowledge, information and learn new skills, then it is important to understand their emotional well-being.



Learners who are emotional, due to home environmental circumstances, will not be able to take in any new knowledge and therefore educators need to be aware of learners' home background (Cefai & Cooper, 2009: 16).

2.3.2 The development of learners in Foundation Phase

From the first day of conception, everybody goes through continuous development. Kanyal and Cooper (2009: 3611) state that schools, in particular the Foundation Phase, play a vital role in the development of young learners. Piaget (in Wassenberg, Kessels, Kalff, Hurks, Jolles, Feron, Hendriksen, Kroes, Beeren & Vles 2005: 1093) furthermore mention that it is important for learners to be active in the early years, as this is the time where the most physical development takes place and will also contribute to other developmental areas such as intellect and personality. Berger (2009: 268) postulates that Early Childhood Development programmes in preschools are vital for the development and growth of learners. Ebersöhn and Eloff (2004: 66) and Fox and Schirmacher (2012: 67) assert that the areas where a child specifically develops during the early years are the physical, cognitive, social, moral and emotional areas and ECD programmes provide just this. De Witt (2009: 4) says that all the developing areas are interlinked with one another and form an integral part of a unique human being.

Palaiologou (2010: 180) maintains that the brain first and foremost plays a vital role in all developmental areas of a child. The stimulation in a preschool contributes to brain development (De Witt, 2009: 85). According to Louw, Van Ede and Louw (1998: 239) the brain of a child is the organ whose growth and development is the most critical in the early childhood years. According to research a child's brain, by the age of five, already has the weight and capacity of about 90% of its adult weight and that its growth rate and development of synapses is extremely rapid during the years before learners go to primary school (De Witt, 2009: 82). Synapses are the space between two neurons that assist in the communication of these neurons (Kalat, 2004: 54). Palaiologou (2010: 180) argues that any synapses that are not stimulated or used literally disappear and therefore it is important that learners are engaged with as much experiences in a stimulated environment as possible.



Winter (2010: 18) notes that babies are born with neurons in their brains, and although the neurons are not yet connected in “networks”, they only start to connect when the neurons are stimulated. There are researchers who argue this point and maintain that a stimulated environment does not necessarily contribute to the synapses developing more effectively but they do state that the experiences learners have are important (Dawson, Ashman & Carver, 2000: 697). Research maintain that the environment as well as the experiences learners gain within the environment contribute to brain development (Brotherson, 2009: 2).

Louw *et al.* (1998: 240) maintain that the two hemispheres of the brain, and in particular the left hemisphere, develop at an astonishing rate during the ages of three and six years and during this stage verbal functions such as speech, reading and writing establish themselves. They further maintain that the right hemisphere develops at a faster rate after the age of six. De Witt (2009: 85) summarises the characteristic functions of the left and right hemispheres of the brain in the following table:

Table 2.1: Features of the left and right hemispheres of the brain

Left hemisphere	Right hemisphere
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Linear functioning – prefers working in a step-by-step approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parallel functioning – works well with a combination of knowledge and feelings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analytic – is a more abstract thinker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Synthetic – combines ideas easily
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Language (good with speech, understanding and writing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Non-verbal communication (prefers to make use of facial expressions and emotions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mathematics (problem solving, puzzles and better at academic work) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Musical and creative (are good with patterns, shapes and have good imagination)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Verbal memory (e.g. remembers names well) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Imagery (e.g. being creative with poems and stories)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Receives and processes information from right visual field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Receives and processes information from left visual field
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Receives and processes information from both ears – prefers the right ear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Receives and processes information from both ears – prefers left ear
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tactile information from the right hand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tactile information from the left hand



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Olfactory (sense of smell) information from the right nasal cavity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Olfactory (sense of smell) information from the left nasal cavity
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According to Posner and Rothbart (2007: 41) research done through autopsies of young children, indicate that the early years of childhood are very important for brain development. When looking at Table 2.1 it is evident that the development of children's left brain during the ages of three and six years are important because if the left hemisphere of the brain is developed to its fullest then good academic learning can take place (De Witt, 2009: 84). Learners in the Foundation Phase often engage in hands-on experiences where they can explore and experiment with materials and through this action, valuable development in the brain takes place (Brotherson, 2005: 8). It has been noted that although learners in the Foundation Phase get the chance to explore and experiment, they sometimes show indecisive behaviour during activities. This study focuses on young learners' indecisiveness and for the purpose of brain development, it is interesting to know that young learners' behaviour within their environment does not come from genes, but are determined from the environment they find themselves in (Posner & Rothbart, 2007: 45). Winter (2010: 13) proclaims that an individual's brain is dependent on experiences in order to develop and that these experiences can be either good or bad as the person will go through different emotions, actions and thoughts to process the experience, also known as cognition.

Cognition can be defined as the thinking process through which a person thinks to solve problems, process new information, add new knowledge to their already existing knowledge and make decisions for themselves (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2004: 14). Berger (2009: 256) maintains that the development of cognition between the ages of two and six is very swift. According to De Witt (2009: 139) cognitive development results in identification, differentiation, generalisation, classification, grouping, ordering, abstraction, symbolisation, reasoning, synthesis and creativity. Furthermore, new information that is learned is always stored with previous information that is closely linked and due to this, it allows a person to reason or argue what has been learnt (Charlesworth & Lind, 2007: 89).



Van der Veer (2007: 88) postulates that cognition has nothing to do with education itself but more with how a person engages with learning opportunities. For example, when learners are set with a problem on how to make a toilet roll stick to a box, they engage with one another by asking questions, listening and interacting, and therefore their cognitive ability develops further (Gordon & Browne, 2008: 457). De Witt (2009: 72) postulates that cognitive development depends on learners' involvement within their environment. She maintains that hands-on experiences and movement with their bodies, could contribute to later acquisition of reading and writing. Here Vygotsky's theory of social development aids us in understanding how learners' cognition develops. Through the process of scaffolding, or aiding learners from their actual capability, they are able to reach their potential capability by adding new information, skills and knowledge to their already existing knowledge and skills (Kozulin *et al.* 2003: 4). Although learners develop at their own pace, there is still a certain structure recognisable in their development in accordance with their age group.

During the time of development, a person goes through a series of events that include the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth (De Witt, 2009: 4). According to Gordon and Browne (2008: 112) developmental milestones are identified as specific skills that take place in every person at more or less the same time, for example, most learners will start walking around the age of one year, but each individual acts uniquely. As already mentioned, every individual develops at a different pace. The following table, Table 2.2, will show what a difference one year makes in the developmental milestones of learners between the ages of five and six.



Table 2.2: The developmental milestones of a five and six year old (Gordon & Browne, 2008: 108–109)

Developmental areas	Five year old	Six year old
Social-emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Asks permission to do things ▪ Accepts and respects authority ▪ Chooses own friends ▪ Likes the interaction with an adult ▪ Starts making group decisions ▪ Enjoys group play ▪ Has a sense of self-identity ▪ Generally does what an adult requests; follows directions and carries out responsibilities most of the time. ▪ Continues to need adult comfort and reassurance, but may be less open in seeking and accepting comfort ▪ Is helpful and cooperative in carrying out family chores and routines. ▪ Is fearful that mother may not come back; very attached to home and family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does not show persistence ▪ Tends to be know-it-all ▪ Is free with opinions and advice ▪ Makes friends easily as well as loose friends easily ▪ Mainly has friends of same sex ▪ Is active and outgoing ▪ Proud of accomplishments ▪ Shows aggression through insults ▪ A strong sense of self is evident in terms of preferences and dislikes. ▪ Is eager for teacher's attention, praise, reassurance; now views teacher (rather than parent) as the ultimate source of "truth."
Creative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explores variety of art processes ▪ Becomes engrossed in details of painting and drawing ▪ Thinks out loud ▪ Likes to copy other learners ▪ Has ideas, loves to talk about them ▪ Enjoys making patterns and designs ▪ Has idea of what to draw – wants to make something recognizable ▪ Shows improved scissors skills (cutting out simple shapes) but still has difficulty with it ▪ Identifies and names four to eight colours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tries out artistic exploration seriously for the first time ▪ Is productive and hardworking ▪ Shows greater interest in the process and not the end-product ▪ Is eager, curious, enthusiastic ▪ Loves to colour and paint ▪ Understands cause and effect ▪ Likes cooperative projects, activities, tasks ▪ Shows interest in skill and technique
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is curious about everything ▪ Wants to know "how?" "Why?" ▪ Likes to display new knowledge, skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Works in spurts, not persistent ▪ Can consider others' point of view ▪ Uses logic, systematic thinking ▪ Can plan ahead



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Somewhat conscious of ignorance ▪ Attention span increases noticeable ▪ Makes a plan, follows it, centres on task ▪ Seldom sees things from another's point of view. ▪ Understands concepts of same shape, same size ▪ Speech is almost entirely intelligible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can sequence events ▪ Concepts of winning and losing are difficult ▪ May cheat or change rules ▪ Sifts and sorts information ▪ Can conceptualise situations ▪ Span of attention increases; works at tasks for longer periods of time, though concentrated effort is not always consistent. ▪ Clings to certain beliefs involving magic or fantasy: the Tooth Fairy swapping a coin for a tooth; Santa Claus bringing gifts.
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uses big words and complete sentences ▪ Can define some words ▪ Takes turn in conversation ▪ Has clear ideas and articulates them ▪ Asks questions to learn answers ▪ Uses 1500 words ▪ Thinks out loud 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Talks with adults rather than to them ▪ Chatters incessantly ▪ Dominates conversations ▪ Speech irregularities still common ▪ Bilingual capacities nearly complete ▪ vocabulary consists of ten thousand to fourteen thousand words ▪ Ability to learn new language still present ▪ Capable of learning more than one language; does so spontaneously in a bi- or multilingual family. ▪ Asks many questions.

De Witt (2009: 72) maintains that learners develop in their own individual ways at their own specific time, but in the end their development takes place in more or less the same way. Some of these milestones, according to Gordon and Browne (2008: 108), involve the curiosity of young learners, about everything they witness and experience, and because of their egocentricity, they like to test these new skills. It is important to look at the developmental milestones of five and six-year-olds because it can hold clues why some learners show indecisive behaviour. De Witt (2009: 4) postulates that learners contribute to their own development through reacting to the stimuli they receive, a phenomenon which impacts their lives at a later stage. Furthermore, Isbell and Raines (2003: 234) mention that the social environment



learners find themselves in, also contributes to their development, because they communicate their ideas and feelings to one another.

Differences in learners can be the result of various reasons. De Witt (2009: 6) indicates that young learners' behaviour is determined by their experience in their environment, which furthermore has an influence on the development of their personalities. Learners who have a variety of activities and/or materials to choose from in the classroom will also differ from learners who have limited resources to choose from. Learners who can make their own choices in contrast to learners whose choices are made for them by an adult will also be different from one another. The latter will result in absence of creative stimuli, interest and imagination, and these aspects all affect the development of learners as a whole. Dowling (2005: 50) states that learners need to become "self-sufficient" and need to consider choices for themselves without the adults doing it for them on their behalf. Kaufman and Sternberg (2010: 238–239) states that the impact of learners being creative is vital to their development. For the purpose of the research question, it is important to understand creativity and young learners' own choice-making which will be discussed next.

2.3.3 Creative ability

Learners between the ages of five and six years are, according to Piaget (1896-1980), in the pre-operational stage (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2004: 400). During this stage learners are most likely to think in symbolic terms or in other words, in a creative, visual way. According to Simonton (2000: 153) many factors such as the family environment as well as the circumstances in which learners grow up contribute to learners' creative ability and with how much confidence they will perform. Simonton (2000: 151) maintains that creativity is a very important part in people's lives. One should not underestimate a child's imagination. A piece of paper easily becomes a "cell phone" when they fold the paper to create a phone that can flip open as well as adding all the necessary digits and colour to create a "colour screen". Being able to think and to be creative, learners can express themselves through the means of art



and discover new possibilities when given the chance to make a discovery (Schirrmacher, 2006: 97; Davin & Van Staden, 2004: 56).

Craig and Deretchin (2010: 8) define creativity as the ability to create an imaginative and original product without being restricted. For the purpose of this study, creativity will only refer to the artwork as created by young learners. Learners in the early years of the Foundation Phase, spend a considerable amount of time on creating artwork, because it allows them to create meaning and understanding of skills (Mayesky, 2006: 36). Although most artwork might be done by the learners individually, a great deal of interpersonal socialisation takes place among them during the art-making process and it is here where learners gain skills and knowledge from within their environment; in accordance with the premises of social constructivism (Simonton, 2000: 154). According to the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS document) of South African schools, the Foundation Phase allows ample time for free play where, through experience, involvement in art and creativity also takes place (CAPS, 2011: 20).

Free play, or spontaneous play, according to Mayesky (2006: 108), is when learners are allowed to choose activities and where the teacher does not intervene in these choices as opposed to opportunities where learners have to adhere to a specific time limit and have to achieve results within a specific period. During “organised” working time, learners should also be creative workers with an ability to think, to reason and to choose how they want to create their artwork. This will, in turn, show the learners that they can be independent and function successfully without any interference of adult dominance (Gordon & Browne, 2008: 295). This adult dominance over the artwork can be referred to as teacher-directed work.

Schirrmacher (2006: 227) maintains that many educators follow a teacher-directed process where the art-process is dominated by the teacher and the end product corresponds with the teacher’s ideas and not the child’s. The artwork is aesthetically attractive and precise, but without taking into account that the learners do not use their own creativity and do not explore the options in order to create original art.



Figure 2.5: An example of teacher-directed artwork

Figure 2.5 is an example of teacher-directed work. In the image it can be seen that all the artwork looks exactly the same; the houses and trees are all placed on the same side and it looks visually very beautiful with no flaws. Even every single roof of the houses is precisely placed upon the houses. In Figure 2.6 the images portray the same project of making “flowers and caterpillars” but all these images look different. The flowers and caterpillars are positioned differently from one another. This is an example of a child-directed process where the learners constructed and directed their own knowledge. The learners were allowed to make their artwork the way *they wanted* to and not the way the *teacher* wanted it to look like at the end.



Figure 2.6: An example of children-directed artwork



It is easy to make-or-break young learners' creativity. Palaiologou (2010: 192–193) maintains that the creative process of learners can either be motivated and merited to assist learners in their creative development or can be criticised by educators to break them down. Young learners sometimes feel that they have the responsibility to make their parents or teachers proud and thus become fearful of disappointment (Cangelosi, 2014: 35). This led me to wonder if fear in young learners were derived from the pressure of not being able to create artwork as aesthetic as that of the teacher and that their parents might be disappointed.

Mayesky (2006: 38) states that from research done on young learners' art, learners' own input into their art has a positive and lasting impact on their self-confidence. It is however, very easy for learners to lose motivation and self-confidence when learners' creative abilities are suppressed and when their ideas are discouraged by teachers. Landsberg, Krüger and Nel (2005: 452) emphasise that negative behaviour can occur if learners are not motivated and supported in a classroom. Therefore it is the duty of the teacher to grant opportunities for learners so that they can experiment and explore their ideas (Sharp, 2004: 8).

Edwards (2005: 76) explains that the process of creativity stimulates learners to explore, whereupon they will reflect and think about the process they followed. Speaking from my own experience as a teacher, it can be stated that learners enjoy exploration and also learn throughout the creative process. According to Palaiologou (2010: 193) learners' creativity does not "drop out of thin air" but it involves a whole process of allowing them to engage and experiment with materials and experiences so that they can test and try all possibilities. The following figures A–E, prove this as it was seen during the actual research process:



Figure 2.7: Children's ability to be creative

Figure 2.7 shows that young learners have the capability to be creative and to use their own imagination to depict what they want to make. The project entailed the creation of their own houses. The theme of the week was “houses” and discussions during morning ring included information on different houses, housing, how houses are built and what they are built from, just to name a few examples. It is evident that learners depict things different from one another if they are given the chance to make their own choices. Creativity and imagination evidently took place and the learners themselves made use of problem solving skills and communication to talk to one another about the project itself. The learners, who created the artwork in Figure 2.7, image (A) and (B) only made use of crayons to draw their houses but one can see that both look different. The learner of the artwork in image (C) went about his house completely differently. He created a double storey house as well as a tree house next to it with an aeroplane flying overhead. He said that “people can also



stay in an aeroplane.” In image (D) the child mainly made use of different coloured paper which she cut and pasted to make her house, the grass, trees and sun. She chose not to use a lot of crayons. The last image, image (E) the child decided not to draw his house on the paper and keep it like that. He wanted to cut it out. These five images show the different ways learners can use their creativity and initiative.

Isbell (in Fox and Schirmacher 2012: 6), proclaim that when learners explore the possibilities of different materials, their creative ability starts to develop. Creativity can be seen as one’s own ideas to create something new (Mayesky, 2006: 616).

2.3.4 Creativity in the Foundation Phase

Glassman (2001: 6) refers to Dewey (1858-1952) when maintaining that the key to discovering new experiences lies in exploring immediate activities, such as creating artefacts. Learners spend a lot of time creating artwork in the pre-primary school years. Not only is it a learning strategy at this level but it is also their way to express emotions, opinions and creativity. Furthermore, Lambert (2005: 251) asserts that young learners’ art can lead to other skills such as problem solving, social, language and mathematical skills.

Dr. Elsie Calits, principal of the Reggio Emilia School in Centurion, Pretoria emphasises the importance of visual arts in young learners’ lives. In an informal interview that was conducted on the 28th of May 2012 with Dr. Calits, she recognises art as a contributing factor to brain development of learners and claims that the environment in which learners create art, forms the foundation for opportunities to explore and create. Efland (2002: 37) refers to a beautiful metaphor used by Vygotsky when he says that learners are like a garden being nurtured by the gardener who is the teacher. This is a classic metaphorical example of how Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development can be applied with the teacher and/or more capable peers assisting learners to reach their full potential. Mayesky (2006: 21) states that learners’ creativity is largely influenced through play and exploration.



Play, according to Mayesky (2006: 117), is the ideal way for gaining new knowledge because the learners explore and experiment with materials and items within the environment. Gordon and Browne (2008: 167) quote: “Play is the cornerstone of learning, the foundation from which learners venture forth to investigate, to test out.” Apart from suggesting an integrated curriculum, Mayesky (2006: 110) maintains that young learners’ growth and development are influenced through play. According to Milteer, Kenneth and Ginsburg (2012: 204) play forms an important part of learners’ development and contributes greatly to learners’ creativity. Play allows learners to interact with one another through conversing, sharing ideas and knowledge and processing new information and through these processes cognitive skills are developed (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2004: 14). Milteer *et al.* (2012: 204) contribute to this statement when proclaiming that play allows learners to be creative beings and as such holistic development can take place.

Edwards (2004: 35) asserts that when learners are allowed the freedom to create art it could contribute to their emotional and intellectual development. Visual arts, as a subject, provide learners the opportunity to exercise their creativity. Eckhoff (2008: 464) maintains that the importance of the learning environment for learners must not be taken lightly. Mayesky (2006: 91) mentions that it is up to the teacher to create a stimulating visual arts environment that encourages creativity and that allows learners to be active participants in creating their own artwork (Henning, 2011: 12). Such an environment will contribute to learners constructing new knowledge whilst sharing ideas and interacting with other learners, is the essence of Vygotsky’s social development theory (Beaumie, 2006: 2).


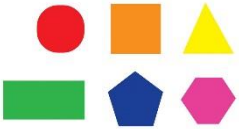


As mentioned earlier on in this chapter, I have noticed that learners can make do with any kind of material, whether it is material that was bought in its original form for example, crayons and paint or open-ended materials such as sticks, toilet rolls or even egg boxes to create a beautiful and creative piece of artwork. Isbell and Raines (2003: 110) proclaim that when learners create artwork at a young age, the process is far more important than the product because of the learning and development that take place during the process.



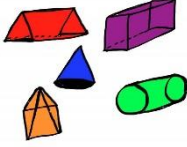




2.3.5 The importance of visual arts in the Foundation Phase

During the process of creating visual artwork, learners are engaged in an explorative way where they experiment, discover, repeat things if it did not work the first time and are actively involved with the materials (Fox & Schirmacher, 2012: 6). According to Koster (2012: 229) visual arts can be defined as creating something through means of line, shape, colour, hues, form, texture, pattern and space in a two- or three-dimensional context as illustrated in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: The elements of art

Example	Definition
<p>Line</p> 	<p>Lines are spontaneously and freely drawn in different directions for example crisscross, twists, straight, parallel and can vary in size, width and weight (Wachowiak & Clements, 2006: 11).</p>
<p>Shape</p> 	<p>Shapes are used in two-dimensional art and can vary in length, width and are made with lines that are joined to create the shape (Fox & Schirmacher, 2012: 123).</p>
<p>Colour</p> 	<p>There are three types of colours: Primary colours (blue, red and yellow), secondary colours when two primary colours are mixed together (red combined with yellow = orange, yellow combined with blue = green and red combined with blue = purple) and intermediate colours, when primary and secondary colours are mixed, for example, yellow and orange = yellow-orange or blue and green = blue-green (Fox & Schirmacher, 2012: 120).</p> <p>Colours are also divided into warm colours: red, orange and yellow and cold colours: green, blue and purple (Wachowiak & Clements, 2006: 14).</p>
<p>Hues</p> 	<p>Hues are one colour but that has different shades (Fox & Schirmacher, 2012: 121).</p>



<p>Form</p> 	<p>Forms are present in three-dimensional art when lines, colour and the shape can be seen in the space that it is (Bersson, 2004: 16).</p>
<p>Texture</p> 	<p>Textures can be seen on the surface of artwork and can be rough, smooth, hard, soft, flat, granular, wet, sticky, dry, dull, shiny, course or fine (Fox & Schirmacher, 2012: 128).</p>
<p>Pattern</p> 	<p>Patterns are the repetition of something whether it be lines, shapes or colours (Koster, 2012: 104).</p>
<p>Two-dimensional art</p> 	<p>Two-dimensional art has two important elements: space or depth on a flat surface (Bersson, 2004: 36; Rowsell, 1983: 167).</p>
<p>Three-dimensional art</p> 	<p>Three-dimensional art has height, width and depth (Bersson, 2004: 27). Three-dimensional art can be something that resembles anything and does not need to be something in particular (Fox & Schirmacher, 2012: 234).</p>

It is important to understand the elements of visual art as learners will come face to face with them when they choose their own materials to create artwork. Berger (2009: 268) states that creativity in preschools should be encouraged because it contributes to knowledge and skills. As learners create artwork, they often interact



with one another through conversing and sharing ideas and knowledge (Edwards, 2004: 38). Not only does this have an influence on their knowledge, but it also contributes to their language and cognitive skills, because Koster (2012: 5) states that when learners are interactive with other learners within the chosen environment the neurons inside the brain grow at a faster rate. Eckhoff (2008: 463) mentions that the visual arts are a wonderful field for learners' learning to take place and that it contributes to learners' development as a whole, in other words, holistically (Henning, 2011: 159).

Mayesky (2006: 245) maintains that art, for learners, is a natural process and that they do it spontaneously. Therefore visual arts plays a role in how learners succeed in their later school years because of the contribution it makes to the different developmental areas of learners such as cognitive, social, emotional and physical development (Koster, 2012: 5–6; Wesson, 2006: 40). Fox and Schirmacher (2012: 33) proclaim that visual arts should be included in the greater part of the curriculum for young learners and should not be taken lightly.

According to CAPS (2011) schools in the South African educational context today, make use of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) outcomes-based education was the foundation for South African schools before the new CAPS document was implemented in 2012. The NCS (2003: 2) consisted of eight learning areas: Languages, Numeracy, Natural Sciences, Technology, Social Sciences, Arts and Culture, Life Orientation and Economic and Management Sciences. Today the CAPS document has three main areas which are Home Languages, Mathematics and Life Skills. Instead of the eight separate learning areas, Life skills cover Beginning Knowledge, Creative Arts, Physical Education and Personal and Social Well-being as depicted in the CAPS document (CAPS, 2011: 6).

- *Beginning Knowledge* covers the content of Social Sciences, such as history and geography as well as the Natural Sciences and Technology (CAPS document, 2011: 8).



- *Creative arts* as a subject, covers the four art areas of dancing, drama, music and visual arts (CAPS document, 2011: 9).
- *Physical Education* looks at the development of gross (for example, being able to balance while walking on a straight line) and fine motor (for example, being able to pick up bird seeds with the thumb and index finger) skills (CAPS document, 2011: 9).
- *Personal and Social Well-being* looks at the skills of health whether it is personal-, social- or emotional health (CAPS document, 2011: 9).

The time allocated for the creative arts are approximately two hours per week (20 hours per term) and it is during this time that not only visual arts take place but also performing arts which takes up the other 10 hours of the 20 hours allocated to Creative Arts per term (CAPS, 2011: 22). An interview with a visual arts lecturer, Mrs. Annelise Roos, was held on the 11th of September 2013 at the University of Pretoria, where she trains student-teachers. Her opinion, upon asking whether there is a specific arts policy, is that there is no specific policy in general for teaching visual arts in schools, but just the recommendations as stated in the CAPS document.

As an educator and from prior experience, two hours per week dedicated only to the creative arts, and approximately one hour just for visual arts, does not seem adequate. Sharp (2004: 6) emphasises that learners have a natural ability of being creative and where they spontaneously create, use their imagination, explore and experiment. Mayesky (2006: 22) suggests an “integrated curriculum” for young learners where all the various content areas are integrated with one another instead of being taught separately.

It is imperative that the factors that inhibit learners to make choices with regard to their own artwork, should be identified during the research, because guidelines can be constructed for teachers to assist learners who struggle to make choices.



2.3.6 Allowing learners to make choices

Thomas Jefferson once said: “Freedom is the right to choose: the right to create for oneself the alternatives of choice...” (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999: 349). Angelides and Michaelidou (2009: 37) posit that if we want to bring change to cultivate sound education, then we as educators need to listen to the “voices” of learners, whether it is in speech or the way they do things. In other words: Learners should be allowed to make own choices (Wiseman & Gilbert, 2014: 115). Gordon and Browne (2008: 295) postulate that learners’ own choice-making make them feel less controlled by adults and more confident about themselves.

The value of learners putting their own ideas to work through choice-making contributes to learners having a positive attitude and outlook (Kanyal & Cooper, 2010: 3605). Compelling learners to try and surpass their capabilities, causes anxiety, whether it is parents or the teacher who wants learners to excel beyond their capabilities (Gilbert, 2002: 33). They furthermore, proclaim that young learners’ own choice-making, along with their opinion about the learning process, does not only contribute to them holistically, but can greatly contribute to education as it could help shape the educational practice and what is acquired to fulfil learners’ learning.

A lot of research has been done on adolescents and high school pupils that struggle with indecisiveness, as well as the advantages of learners making their own choices, but not a lot on young learners’ indecisiveness and what happens to them when they cannot make choices. Pretorius (1998: 5) maintains that the main aim of education is to support learners in order to become socially involved and independent in their environment and to have self-confidence. It is important that teachers create an environment where learners are able to experience own choice-making, can explore their own ideas and not feel scared that someone will diminish their choices (Cangelosi, 2014: 62–63). Upon the aim of education, learners’ own choice-making guides them to become active and caring citizens inside the community (Kohn, 1993: 5).



Some research has already indicated that learners' voices (opinions) have contributed to the development of education (Kanyal & Cooper, 2010: 3605). It may just be the case that their behaviour, whether decisive or indecisive, also holds significant clues that may also contribute to the development of education. Harbaugh, Krause and Vesterlund (2002: 53) feel that the choices young learners make will not necessarily have an influence on development. Kinney and Wharton (2008: 3) strongly disagree by saying that learners become more independent as they reflect and learn because of the choices they make. Jolivette, Stichter and McCormick (2002: 27) also assert that exercising personal choices have a positive effect on interpersonal interaction among the learners. By allowing learners to make their own choices in the classroom, the outcome reached may not always be the one desired by the teacher, but allows for valuable experiences through which learners will learn and reflect upon and this is a useful way to promote more independent and happy learners. Making choices prompts learners to think creatively and also to think beyond the inevitable as well as allowing them to reflect upon their learning. Hewett (2001: 96) maintains that learners are natural researchers and by using their experiences, discoveries and by social interaction they reflect and thus constant learning takes place.

Learners learn at their best when the teacher supports their choices in expressing themselves (Van Hoorn, Manighan, Scales & Rodrigues, 2007: 298). Many educators believe that they have all the answers to better education for learners, but it could just be that the learners, themselves, hold clues, clues that are suppressed because of teacher-directed classroom practices. Early research done with learners proved that learners, as young as they were, were able to make own choices for their own ideas, have potential and convey their own opinions. However learners' choices are often and easily stifled (Schiller & Einarsdottir, 2009: 125). Kohn (1993: 6) maintains that when a teacher makes choices for learners in their work, it deprives the learners of their motivation, determination and self-confidence. There are advantages and disadvantages when learners are allowed to make their own choices: Many researchers proclaim that making own choices contribute to motivated learners that perform better, have more determination and achieve a higher sense of satisfaction (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999: 349). According to Harbaugh



et al. (2002: 5) there are also disadvantages for learners making own choices at such a young age. It is not certain what the outcomes will be when learners make their own choices or whether the outcomes will have consequences in the long run. Fortunately for the purpose of this study, the learners' making of choices does not involve choices across their whole life spectrum, but only the ones concerning their own artwork.

Patalano and LeClair (2011: 163) maintain that indecisiveness comes into play when learners find it difficult to make choices. As an educator of Grade R learners, with a number of years of experience, I have come across many learners who struggle to make decisions, especially if they are given the opportunity to make choices. Hastie (2001: 656) states that decision-making stems from options that are given. Figure 2.8 describes how decision-making occurs in the context of this research study:

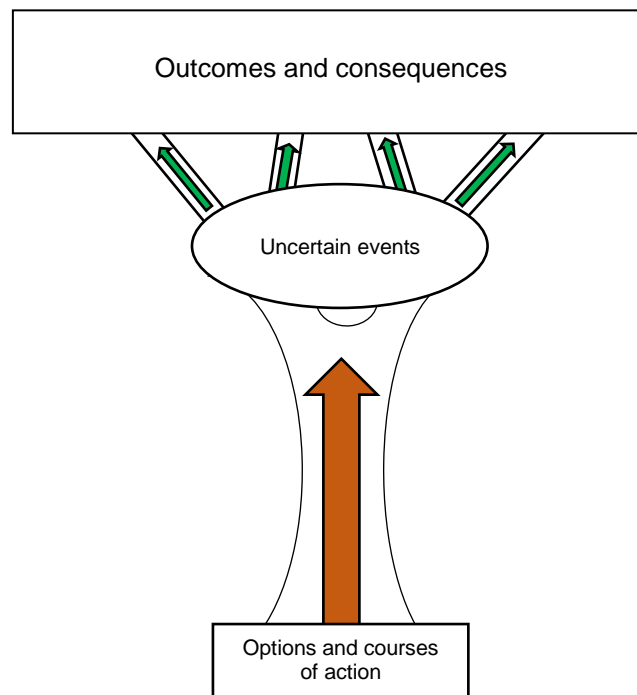


Figure 2.8: Decision tree (Hastie, 2001: 656)

Firstly, the *course of action* would entail that the learners receive an instruction about a project. If the theme of the week was “My birthday”, for example, the learners each received a little box with the instruction that they had to decorate it to look like a



birthday present. Secondly, *uncertain events* occurred where the learners were given the choice to make use of different art materials to decorate their box. Some learners made use of the opportunity to use their own initiative to apply different materials to decorate the box, where others showed a lot of uncertainty of what was required to do and thus found themselves completely lost about what to do or what to choose. Therefore, lastly, the *outcomes* or the *consequences* would depend on how the learners reacted to the choice they had. Indecisive behaviour thus occurs when a child does not know what choice to make (Patalano & LeClair, 2011: 163).

There are situations in schools where learners are battling with certain problems, whether it is personal or learning problems, which in turn lead to a low self-esteem (Hazell, 2002: 229). Patalano and LeClair (2011: 163) maintain that indecisiveness is often the result of a person with a low self-esteem. A healthy self-esteem refers to the positive view people have of themselves and if they experience a low self-esteem, then it means that that they harbour negative feelings about themselves (De Witt, 2009: 120). Patalano and LeClair (2011: 164) further state that indecisiveness is the lack of self-confidence to make choices. If a child then has a low self-esteem and lacks confidence in the classroom it could undeniably lead to under achievement (Pretorius, 1998: 210). The aim with this dissertation is therefore to illuminate and investigate different factors that could lead to young learners' indecisiveness in order to arrive at the corrective actions and to motivate learners improving education.

When an adult makes decisions on behalf of the learners, the learners accept the choice as cast in stone, but if learners are allowed to choose independently, it serves as incentive to think beyond the here and now. Kanyal and Cooper (2010: 3607) support this argument when they say that if learners are provided the opportunity, it benefits their experiences. Any experiences then, can lead to learners discovering their potential. Gordon and Browne (2008: 295) acknowledge the value of learners making choices as this contributes to their independence and self-motivation. Through the freedom of making own choices, ample development also takes place and the learners can discover their own potential (Rubin, 2005: 29).



Van Hoorn *et al.* (2007: 15) maintain that learners could feel comfortable when making their own choices, because they then work at a level that is best suited for them. Learners are receptive of other stimuli, such as input from friends and being comfortable in their environment, thus demonstrating social-constructivism (Mayesky, 2006: 150). A study done by Patalano and LeClair (2011: 171) yielded findings that highlight the value of group work as measure against indecisive behaviour. It was discovered that when learners work together in groups, they tend to have more self-confidence than when working as indecisive individuals groping in the dark.

Through previous research it is evident that visual arts have an influence on young learners' holistic development, ranging from cognitive development to problem solving skills. I have searched many databases for information on learners' indecisiveness in the Foundation Phase but very little research has been done. Evidence of giving learners the opportunity to make own choices in the classroom during the process of creating artefacts seems to be a neglected area in research on emergent learning. The idea was to investigate learners' own decisions with regard to making their own choices and cast light on how it contributed to their decisive or indecisive behaviour.

2.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

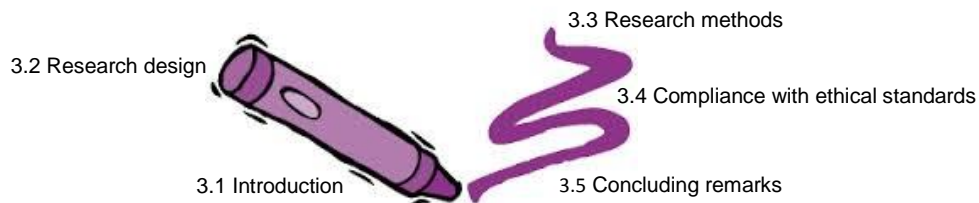
This research study focuses on learners in the Foundation Phase's indecisiveness during visual arts, therefore literature was consulted on young learners' development, their creativity in visual arts as well as their own decisions with regards to exercising personal choices. Vygotsky's theory of Social Development served as my theoretical framework to support this research study. In the following chapter, Chapter three, I will explain the research design and the methods that were used to collect data for my study.

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CHAPTER 3

Research methodology



3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 deals with the research design and methods which were utilised to investigate the factors that inhibit young learners' choice-making during visual arts. The aim of this study was to determine factors that inhibit Foundation Phase learners to make own choices with regard to their artwork. The identification of such factors could serve as the basis to devise guidelines for Foundation Phase teachers to assist young learners when they struggle to show initiative, indecisive behaviour or lack self-confidence. This chapter starts with the research design where the interpretivist paradigm of my qualitative study is explained in detail. It is followed by a brief discussion on the qualitative approach where I have made use of a multiple case study to gather data in order to answer the research questions. The research design section follows after the section on the research methods: The research site as well as the selection of my participants who showed indecisive behaviour during art activities is mentioned and motivated. The data collection and methods of analysis are explained in detail, followed by an elucidation on the maintenance of trustworthiness of my research. Ethical measures are also alluded to.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design embraces the blueprint for the study viz. the interpretivist paradigm, qualitative approach and the elements within the approach that were used to conduct research, as these were ideally suited for this study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 23). The following sections cover the interpretivist paradigm, the qualitative approach as well as the multiple case study used for this research study:



3.2.1 An interpretivist paradigm

“A paradigm, for qualitative research, focuses on people’s social construction of their ideas and concepts” (Maree, 2007: 54). Shkedi (2005: 1) maintains that a paradigm is a way of analysing the world in order to understand how different views interrelate and connect with reality. The word *interpretation* can be defined as a way of understanding human meanings and their behaviour, without intervening in the process (Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, 2009: 487; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007: 20). I worked within the interpretivist paradigm in observing and understanding the indecisive behaviour that some learners have during visual art activities. According to Williamson (2006: 84) the interpretivist paradigm refers to knowledge that is constructed from observations that are made in a real and natural setting and therefore it was especially well-suited to my study.

Maree (2007: 21) as well as Eloff and Ebersöhn (2004: 380) mention that the interpretivist paradigm relies heavily on hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the study and the interpretation of theory and text (Maree, 2007: 58). Table 3.1 gives an explanation on how hermeneutics are represented in this study. It was thus important to consult literature from other academics, but even more so to understand the participants and to realise that the learners were all unique individuals with their own levels of potential before grappling with the question why some learners showed indecisive behaviour and others not.

Although the interpretivist paradigm can be extended to broader contexts (for example other places and other times) I have chosen to conduct my study in my own setting as it is every day. Being the teacher as well as researcher, I was a participant-observer within the learners’ social environment where the learners made their own choices about their artwork. I observed and reflected on their behaviour and responses when they had to exercise choices. This “natural environment” was the grade R classroom where the learners were engaged with visual arts on a daily basis as depicted in the school’s daily programme (see Appendix D).



The interpretivist paradigm accommodates a reflective process where meaning is derived from constant reflection (Ponterotto, 2005: 129). I did not only want to see how young learners constructed meaning from their social environment, but I, as a researcher, also wanted to construct meaning from the environment where real events such as learning and play took place. I consequently opted to write down the observations that I made in a reflective journal which is referred to as a diary. I reflected upon the learners' experiences, the observations I made, as well the process of making art. Writing down my own feelings in this reflective journal was also necessary, because it was important to see if and how my feelings influenced the learners' choice-making. All the data that I collected through observations, interviews, photographs and artefacts were interpretive (Gerring, 2006: 69). The following table summarises the role of the interpretivist paradigm for this study:

Table 3.1: The interpretivist paradigm in this research study

Key factors for the interpretivist paradigm	Why the interpretivist paradigm was ideal for my study
Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Observations were one of my data collection methods. ▪ This allowed me to notice behaviour, responses, actions, emotions and attitudes of the learners that I wrote down in a reflective journal. ▪ It contributed to my knowledge of learners' indecisiveness in the classroom during the art-making process.
Real and natural setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The learners in the Grade R class spend a minimum of four hours a day in the classroom and thus it becomes a place where they feel safe and comfortable. ▪ This served as a setting where real events such as learning and play took place.
Reflective process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The reflective process was executed through the use of a diary in which I jotted down the feelings and emotions I experienced throughout this study.



Hermeneutics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In this study I wished to understand the participants and realised that they were all unique individuals with their own levels of potential. ▪ Once I understood this I could then apprehend that some learners showed indecisive behaviour. ▪ Although I consulted various literature sources, my primary focus was to gain knowledge from the participants through the various data collection methods. ▪ I collected rich data through my reflective journal in which I wrote down the observations I made, the feelings and emotions I went through, as well as the transcribed interviews in chapter four of data analysis.
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It was important to construct a profile for each participant in order to understand them better. The profiles contained information about the learners' background in terms of home language, chronological age when the study took place, family backgrounds, their personalities in class as well as the parents' occupations and age. The purpose of the profiles was to see if any background information also led to possible indecisiveness. These profiles are presented in Chapter 4 (See 4.3).

This interpretivist paradigm suited my research well because it allowed me to recognise each participant as a unique individual within their natural environment inside the classroom.

3.2.2 A qualitative approach

This study followed a qualitative research approach involving case studies that relied heavily on the viewpoints of the participants and not only on the literature (Creswell, 2008: 46). Qualitative research focuses on a phenomenon where the data are mostly obtained through the non-numerical means from the participants in the study. The qualitative approach is also valuable to understand the process that was followed (Creswell, 2008: 53; Maree, 2007: 257). The following table (Table 3.2) describes the characteristics of a qualitative approach and how these applied to my research study.



Table 3.2: The characteristics of a qualitative approach in this research study

Characteristics of a qualitative approach	Application in my research study
<p>Exploration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although there are variables in the research question, very little is known about the variables (Creswell, 2008: 51). Through exploration, a central phenomenon can be understood (Maree, 2007: 257). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The phenomenon of this study is indecisive behaviour that learners have when they are allowed to make own choices during art activities. This research would like to explore and understand what factors contribute to their indecisiveness and what corrective action can be taken to overcome indecisiveness.
<p>Understanding a phenomenon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose is to understand a single phenomenon (Creswell, 2008: 54). Broad and open-ended questions assist in understanding the phenomenon (Maree, 2007: 257). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploration of a phenomenon leads to the understanding of the phenomenon of indecisive behaviour in Foundation Phase learners during visual arts. One of the data collection methods I used to gain knowledge about this phenomenon was interviews where <i>informal conversation interviews</i> and <i>open-ended interviews</i> were held with the learners and <i>semi-structured interviews</i> with the parents.
<p>Natural setting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data are collected from human participants in their natural environment (Ary <i>et al.</i> 2010: 22). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five grade R learners were my main participants for this study where data was collected inside the classroom during visual arts activities (Interviews were also held with their parents). The learners were used to the art activities as these were part of the daily programme opted for by the school.
<p>Purposeful sampling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sample size is generally small and participants are selected for a purpose (Maree, 2007: 257; Brontlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach & Richardson, 2005: 196). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I deliberately selected the five participants for this study because I knew that they would provide rich data about the phenomenon viz. indecisiveness.



<p>Collecting words and pictures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The researcher is the key tool to collect data (Ary <i>et al.</i> 2010: 25). • Data are collected directly through subjective methods such as: observation, interviews, documents, audio-visual material and artefacts (Maree, 2007: 257 and Brontlinger <i>et al.</i> 2005: 197). • No instrumental measurements for statistics takes place (Creswell, 2008: 55). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was a <i>participant-observer</i> inside the classroom where I was still the teacher: to construct a stimulating environment and to assist the learners with skills they struggled with. I was also an observer where I could jot down <i>observations</i> I made in a <i>reflective journal</i> as well as take <i>photographs</i> to capture the moments of the learners' decisive and indecisiveness. • I had <i>open-ended interviews</i> with the learners. These interviews were spontaneous and asked in situations where I did not know beforehand what a child might have done or how he/she would have reacted. • I also had <i>semi-structured interviews</i> with the parents. The questions were not set in stone and there was room for any other questions I did not determine beforehand. For example: If I asked the parent a predetermined question on what his/her child likes doing at home, their answer might lead to question that I have not determined before the interview.
<p>Relying on participants for data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In qualitative research, the participants are the major informants of data and not the literature (Creswell, 2008: 53). • The literature does not always contain all the information on the phenomenon being studied, therefore the researcher wishes to understand the phenomenon through observations and interviews with participants (Creswell, 2008: 51). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have searched many academic readings on the indecisiveness of young learners and although there are numerous articles on adolescents and high school pupils, there was not a lot on young learners' indecisiveness. • Although the readings made me understand the concept of "indecisiveness" better, this research study itself granted me more information through observations and interviews to understand the phenomenon in the context of my study.
<p>Analysis consists of words and pictures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data from interviews is transcribed and along with the other data collected, codes and categories that arise are labelled (Ary <i>et al.</i> 2010: 25; Maree, 2007: 257). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After interviews with the five learners and their parents, the audio material was transcribed.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The researchers' reflections play a role as they assist in the analysis and interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2008: 56). • The data analysis correlates categories which are then analysed into patterns (Creswell, 2008: 58). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Along with the transcribed notes and the other data from observations, photographs and the reflective journal, I began looking for themes that correlated with one another and labelled them accordingly. • There were distinct relationships among the categories and I could therefore create patterns.
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The characteristics portrayed in this table are seen throughout this research study and clearly indicate that a case study design was best suited for this particular research.

3.2.3 Multiple case study

Maree (2007: 75) explains that case study research follows ways which allow the researcher to look at an event or real-life phenomenon with the goal to discover why certain matters arise within the event. As an interpretivist researcher, I made use of case studies to explore and understand the factors that influenced young learners' indecisive behaviour during visual arts (Willis, 2007: 240). According to Creswell (2008: 477) case studies can also involve multiple cases where more than one case gives insight to the phenomenon being studied. The multiple case study for this study assured that I got a more detailed understanding of the phenomenon than what a single case would have done (Mills *et al.* 2009: 582).

My multiple case studies involved five Grade R learners in my classroom, four of them that showed indecisive behaviour when confronted with art activities and one learner that did not show indecisive behaviour and therefore demonstrated creativity and initiative with regard to his/her artwork. The reason for this was to see what contextual factors influenced decisive behaviour as opposed to the role of contextual factors that influenced indecisive behaviour.



3.3 RESEARCH METHODS

The research methods describe where the data was collected, how it was collected and the process of the data analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 8). Attention is also paid to ensure trustworthiness. The following sections explain the methods used for this study viz. the research site and the selection of my participants, the role of the researcher, data collection, data analysis as well as the measures to ensure validity and trustworthiness.

3.3.1 Research site and participants

This section describes in detail where the research took place and what steps I took to select the participants for the study whilst taking into account that they are minors and hence vulnerable.

3.3.1.1 Research site

The research site played an important part in this study because it was the environment where the learners resided on a daily basis. The school was situated in a suburb of Pretoria that hosts children from different countries' embassies, but also children from in and around Pretoria. The school opened in 1999 with many different languages and cultures that exist symbiotically in a classroom with English as the main language of instruction. There were 25 learners per class. As a teacher, I had access to a pre-primary Grade R classroom of learners between the ages of five and six years of age where I could establish trustful relationships with them and that was why I chose my own classroom for this purpose. A sound relationship had already been established between my participants and me since we were familiar with each other. The school was a private institution and therefore I had to be granted permission from the principal in order to do research at the school. (See Appendix A).

The Grade R classroom had ample space that ensured some personal space if the learners required it and the art activities were not limited to the art area only, but the



learners could choose to work at the desks, on the floor, or by the easels. Figure 3.1 provides a panoramic view of the inside of the classroom.



Figure 3.1: A panoramic view of the classroom where the children were daily

A weekly theme formed part of the school’s programme, for example “autumn”. This meant that everything from language skills to numeracy skills formed part of that week’s particular theme and was integrated with all the learning areas. The artwork would then also stem from that theme. As the learners were used to this and got a specific project, the only exception was that they could choose *how* they wanted to create their artwork or with *what* they wanted to create it. The following photographs (as further alluded to in Chapter 2 - see section 2.3.2) serve as examples:



Autumn tree one



Autumn tree two



Autumn tree three

Figure 3.2: Learners creating the same art project, but with different outcomes



The instruction was to make autumn trees from tree bark, twigs and coloured paper pieces but the learners could choose how they wanted to use and place the bark, twigs and paper in order to create them.

A rich art environment was created to cater for the needs of all the learners in their selection of multifarious art supplies and open-ended materials. The learners could select what and how they wanted to use the supplies and materials to create their work completely of their own accord. It is important to note that the learners would not be left unsupervised and unruly on their own but would be guided and supported as to reach optimal learning as prescribed by the Curriculum. The prescribed number of hours that should be spent on art in the Foundation Phase per week only served as a guideline (as explained in section 2.3.4) The school had a daily programme (see Appendix D) that gave a brief outline of how the daily activities are divided and therefore there was ample opportunity to complete artwork irrespective of how long the learners needed to finish within reasonable limits.

The prescribed art activity per day (according to the school's daily programme) was approximately 45 – 50 minutes. This included the main activity as well as the side activities. The main activity for a particular day, for example, would be the construction of an autumn tree with twigs and tree bark. Then the side activities would be to splatter paint the background of the artwork, to cut leaves for the tree from coloured paper and to tear and paste green tissue paper to create grass. The scheduled activities were during this prescribed time and were incorporated with the theme of the week, for example "autumn". Art took place every day just after the morning ring activities and before free play (as prescribed on the daily programme). Research took place during that time every day for the duration of approximately four and a half months. As a teacher, I assisted the learners during the main and side activities upon giving them choices. Abundant data was collected in that time and the duration thereof allowed me to not only look at the factors, but also to look at corrective actions (and its impact) to address learners' indecisiveness.

The plan of action, with regard to this study, was to prepare the classroom in order to have a variety of art materials available and ready to encourage access to materials.



These materials ranged from crayons to waste materials. In order to achieve this preparation, materials that were used for art were stored in picture-labelled containers as well as the name of the content in the Grade 1 font (the computerised font that assist in beginners reading), which gave the learners the opportunity to see what was available and the freedom to choose what they wanted to use to create their art. The photos in Figure 3.3 depict these picture-labelled containers:



Figure 3.3: An example of what the containers looked like

The learners still received an instruction about the artwork. The instruction would guide the learners on the particular artwork and skills that need to be addressed. Based upon that, they were given choices on *how* or with *what* they wanted to create the artwork.

3.3.1.2 The selection of participants

Participants are the people who participate in a research study and from whom data are obtained in order to answer the research questions posed (McMillan &



Schumacher, 2006: 119). The participants for this study were five grade R learners as well as their parents.

i) The Grade R learners as participants

Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants and according to Creswell (2008: 214) this sampling method is used to deliberately select participants who can provide rich data about the phenomenon to be researched. I selected five Grade R learners for this study to obtain my data from. Four of them showed indecisive behaviour and one showed decisive behaviour during the creative process. In this study the phenomenon was the indecisive behaviour that some learners showed during art activities.

Apart from being the researcher, I was also a teacher to the learners, and therefore I gained easy access into the classroom where my presence did not influence their art-making process and data could be gathered easily. I constructed a profile of each learner and these profiles provided more detail on the learners' background, culture and families, as to allow me to identify possible factors which could contribute towards decisive and indecisive behaviour. These profiles are presented in Chapter 4. The multiple case studies were conducted through observations, interviews, photographs and artefacts. Data that emerged from the interviews with the parents also contributed to these profiles.

The ethical considerations are described in detail later on in this chapter but briefly mentioned here for the purpose of describing the selection of the participants: As I did not want any child to feel left out, the entire class was given assent forms to be part of the study. It was made clear that everyone participated in the same art activities as it was still part of the school's daily programme whether there was research done or not (see Appendix D). I then identified the four learners who showed indecisive behaviour through observation and one learner who showed decisive behaviour during the art-making process.

In order to overcome favouritism when I had to select participants for the study, I held a parent's evening at the beginning of the year where the parents as well as the



learners attended. The learners were seated at the desks and the parents had seats on the carpeted area. The learners were given an assent form that contained visual descriptions because they could not read as yet and along with this, I explained the research verbally to them on their level which they could understand and I used “casual” language instead of formal language (see Appendix B). The parents also had access to the assent forms just for their own reassurance had they wished to see what the children’s assent forms looked like. The parents received a consent form as well as a more detailed description of the study, what I would do and what I hoped to achieve through the research (see Appendix C). I explained to them that all the learners would be participants so that they all are treated in the same manner and no one is left out. I also explained that if anyone did decide not to participate, the learners would still be part of the art activity as it formed part of the daily programme, but that I would not take photographs of them or use any observations of them that I made. The parents as well as the learners were allowed to ask questions at any point in time if they did not understand concepts, the process of the research or if they had any concerns about it.

After the explanation, a brief practical session followed where I gave the learners a small project to do so that they as well as the parents could see what and how the research would be conducted. I gave all the learners a piece of paper and had a table ready with art materials on it such as glue, scissors, coloured paper, crayons and paint as shown in Figure 3.4.



Figure 3.4: Items from which the learners could select to create their artwork



The theme of that specific week was “My school” and I gave the learners the instruction that they had to create a picture of their favourite part of the school and that they could choose whether they wanted to paint it, draw it or cut out paper to create it. I then explained to the parents how I would observe the learners, make notes in a journal of the observations as well as take photographs and ask spontaneous questions during this time. Making use of this method the parents could see how I would go about collecting the data for the study. It was thoroughly explained that the research took part during the normal art activity of the day, as prescribed on the daily programme (see Appendix D) and would not interfere with their daily education. Normal school rules still applied, for example, when it was tidy up time, then everybody had to assist in cleaning up. The parents were also informed that they should talk to their children about the research at home, where I was not present, so that if the children had further questions, that they were too shy or scared to ask me, the parents could let me know. The parents were allowed to phone me at any point if they had further questions or concerns.

The learners could decide if they wanted to be participants or not just by circling a smiley face showing thumbs up or a sad face showing thumbs down on the back of the assent form (see Appendix B). It was made clear that the learners were in no way obligated to participate in the research. The learners were reminded that they could withdraw from the research at any point in time, therefore no coercion could take place. I explained to the learners that the research would only take place when they were busy with art. The learners were assured that they were allowed to disagree and were free to choose whether they wanted to participate or whether they just preferred to observe. They were given the assurance that they would still be treated in the same way as others who did not participate in the research. The parents had to sign the consent form after reading and understanding it to give their permission that I could ask their children to be my participants.

The reason for choosing the purposeful sampling method was because I wanted to target a specific group of learners in the Grade R classroom that showed indecisive behaviour when it came to making own choices during art activities. It also wanted to take special care not to neglect the other learners in my class (Maree, 2007: 178). I



noticed that some learners struggled to make their own decisions during art activities, for example: A few years ago the school obtained a stuffed male lion (see section 1.2) and the project was to create a lion. The learners were given a variety of materials that they could choose from and although there were learners that immediately jumped at the opportunity, there were some learners that were hesitant and indecisive. This prompted the idea to study young learners' indecisiveness. The reason for selecting five participants was because I assumed that five learners would be sufficient in providing the necessary rich data. The learners were between the ages of five and six years; three of them were girls and two were boys.

I observed all the learners in the classroom for a number of weeks before I selected my participants, in order to identify learners that struggled with indecisive behaviour and others that do not. As the art activities took place on a daily basis inside the classroom, it made my decision easier. One of these participants was a learner who did not struggle with indecisive behaviour and the reason was to determine which contextual factors contributed to this learner's decisiveness.

ii) The parents as participants

The five learners were my main participants, because the focus was on the phenomenon which was indecisive behaviour by learners that was shown during the art-making process. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the five learner's parents in order to investigate whether the learners' indecisiveness already started at home instead of just at school when they were given choices during art activities.

I was privileged enough that all my participants' parents wanted to do the interviews at the school as it was more convenient for them when they came to pick up their children from school. We arranged an appropriate time that suited every one of them. These interviews were held in a classroom where we were not disturbed. I briefly explained the research and its aims to them again and maintained that I hoped the outcomes of the research could contribute to corrective actions in classrooms. I explained to the parents that I would record the interviews on a voice recorder, but that only I would have access to the recorded version. I further



explained that the interviews would then be transcribed and their real names would not be used, but rather pseudonyms.

3.3.2 The role of the researcher

I wanted to work with the learners in a hands-on way where I could experience the learners' making of choices first-hand, therefore I chose the role as a *participant-observer*. According to Maree (2007: 85) being a participant-observer is normally associated with action research, but I felt that it best suited this study as I was part of the environment, that posed as the learners' natural setting, where I was the teacher as well as researcher. Being a participant-observer, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 350) and Maree (2007: 85), applies to my role because as a teacher I was present in the classroom and the learners already knew me as their teacher. It did not make them feel uneasy with my moving about and as a teacher-researcher I could easily carry on with the daily tasks as a teacher. I could walk around while they were working as well as assist them with skills, such as showing them how to hold scissors correctly, but I could at the same time, be a researcher when I observed them and ask them spontaneous questions while they were busy with their artwork.

As stated by Pole and Morrison (2003: 63), participant observation allows the researcher to be able to observe learners in a natural social setting. The young learners in the class already knew me as their teacher and therefore I found this situation to be more positive because the learners were at ease and showed their true behaviour, because they were familiar with me. Because I carried out the art activities on numerous occasions I could then see whether there a pattern could be identified. Even if a certain type of behaviour only occurred once, it was still considered as a reason for the child to have displayed that behaviour (Cohen *et al.* 2007: 404).

As part of my role as a participant-observer, I was also able to informally interview the learners through spontaneous conversations. An example of a spontaneous question is: "I see you enjoy using the Ponal (runny) glue more than the Pritt. Why is



that?” Parents also formed part of the study as they participated through more in-depth interviews and filled in the gaps on the subject I wished to research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 346–350).

In the letter of informed consent (Appendix C) the parents were informed of my dual role as a teacher as well as that of a researcher in the classroom and it was carefully explained that the learners’ education was still first priority and that my research would not in any way interfere with this. The research was of such a nature, that it allowed for continuation of the normal daily programme. The learners were aware that research was being conducted and I paid closer attention to what they were doing, but otherwise learners were treated in the same manner as when research was not being conducted.

3.3.3 Data collection

As the researcher I was able to collect reliable data in the learners’ natural Grade R setting about the phenomenon that I investigated (Maree, 2007: 37). Data can be collected through various different methods. To collect my data, I made use of the methods as depicted in Figure 3.5.

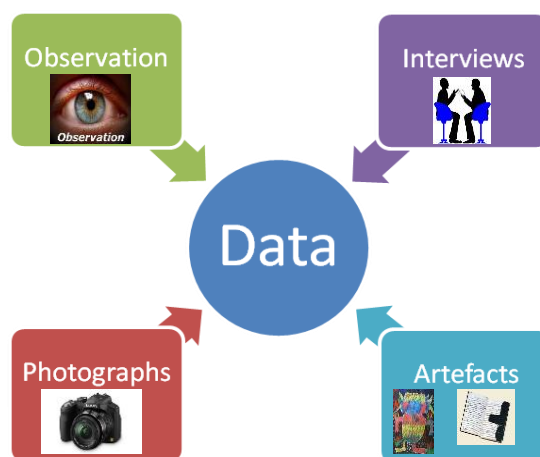


Figure 3.5: The various data collection methods for this study



3.3.3.1 Observation and field notes

Observation is a process of observing participants to gather information on their actions (Creswell, 2008: 221). As a participant-observer my role as participant was to create an art environment for the learners in the classroom where they were allowed and able to make own choices regarding their artwork. These observations took place at the school where the learners attended during art activities. There were a number of things that I wanted to observe, therefore I made use of an observational checklist (Appendix E). The checklist allowed me to look at a number of factors. Following are a few examples:

- Does the learner look anxious when he/she starts the artwork?
- Does the learner go back to the teacher because of uncertainties with regard to his/her artwork?
- Does the learner interact with other peers even though he/she works alone?

I could freely move among the learners as their teacher throughout my observations, but simultaneously gather information and data.

I recorded all the observations I made, with as much possible detail, in journals. Observations were named “field text entries” whereas my personal reflections were named “diary entries”. I observed the learners’ behaviour and saw patterns appear during their art-making process without interrupting the learners’ exploration, experiences and creations. Not only did I want to write down my observations, but I also wished to reflect upon the observations I made.

When observations are made by the researcher, the observations are written down as text to ensure that details of events, activities, the learners’ behaviour and what happened are not left out (Creswell, 2008: 224). Willis (2007: 235) maintains that field notes are made in the natural setting where the research takes place. While I observed the learners during their art-making process inside the classroom, I jotted down everything that I observed, in order to get as much detail as possible to ensure that this contributed to the data analysis process where themes and codes emerge.



Hatch (2007: 143–144) proclaims that field notes might seem ineffective during the research process of collecting data, but that in the end, it could contribute immensely to the findings. As visual arts as a subject is part of the daily programme I had ample time to observe if changes or other contributing factors to learners' indecisiveness occurred.

3.3.3.2 Interviews

Interviews are conversations (prompted by predetermined questions) between the researcher and participants to gain knowledge about a certain problem or subject (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 355). I wanted to gain more knowledge about the learners but from their parents' perspective with the assumption that it would fill gaps or contribute to the data that I collected inside the classroom.

I did not make use of specific interviews with the learners in the classroom because I did not want to distract them from their art-making process and therefore just had casual conversations and spontaneous questions. This is also known as *informal conversation interviews*. McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 355) describe this type of interviews as questions that emerge spontaneously from a direct context and not questions that have been planned beforehand. It linked with participant-observation and took place during and after their art-making process where I could gain insight on their ideas and thoughts. An example of a spontaneous question for the learners was for example: "I saw Lily getting frustrated because the wood shavings kept on falling off her picture." The question I asked was: "Lily, I see your shavings do not want to stick to the paper. How do you think it can work?"

I also had a list of "Addressed topics" (Appendix F) so attention was paid to certain topics such as whether they preferred to choose their own materials for artwork and if so, why. I made use of individual *open-ended* interviews with the learners when the artwork was complete. The main focus during the interviews was to have the learners reflect upon their own artwork and the process they underwent to create it. I also had a voice recorder at hand. The learners were informed about the recorder



beforehand and were allowed to test it to see how it worked and even though they were curious about it in the beginning they got familiar with it.

Interviews were held with the parents to fill in the gaps of what I observed in the classroom, to gain more insight on the background of the learners and whether their environment at home (family, culture, child rearing styles, home language and home setting) could have had an impact on their art-making process. I used *semi-structured* interviews with the parents, because although I could predetermine questions before the interviews, there was still room for questions that I did not determine beforehand (Maree, 2007: 87). In order to make the interview process as comfortable and easy as possible for the parents, I gave them the choice to decide upon the place, date and time for the interviews. This put them at ease as they were in an environment familiar to them and in which they were not under pressure to find and rush to a meeting place unknown to them. As mentioned earlier, all the parents preferred to have the interviews when they came to fetch their children at school as it was most convenient for them. The duration of the interviews varied between fifteen to thirty three minutes. The interview questions followed an *interview guide approach* (Appendix G) where, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 355), I, as the researcher, knew in advance, what questions I would like to ask. In order to put the parents at ease and being comfortable during the interview, I introduced the questions while conversing with them. An example of this could be: “Can your child keep him/herself busy at home or must you provide ideas to keep him/her busy?”

I recorded interviews on digital audio tapes to help ensure that the learners’ and the parents’ entire comprehensive feedback could be captured as to increase my understanding and interpretation of the information provided (Creswell, 2008: 228). According to Marvasti (2004: 54) a problem that often arises when making use of audio tapes is that it could make the participants uncomfortable during the interviews. I gave them the assurance that after the data was retrieved, the recorded interviews as well as the transcribed versions would be safe-guarded in my possession. According to the Early Childhood Development department of the University of Pretoria, all raw data are then kept in storage according to the policy requirements of the university for a period of approximately fifteen years. I also gave



the parents the assurance that I would not criticise or be judgemental on any feedback provided by the learners and parents (Maree, 2007: 88).

3.3.3.3 Photographs

Photographs are a type of audio-visual material that can be collected during observations (Maree, 2007: 257). I took photographs of the art-making process in order to capture the patterns that emerged and saw that over time there was a variation in the learners' behaviour and their decisive- and indecisiveness. I took multiple photographs of the process when the learners created artwork. The photographs also proved to be valuable when observing the learners over a period of time to see if and how progression toward decisiveness took place.

Photographs were routinely taken for internal use by the school, therefore the learners did not find this unusual and it did not influence the data. The parents were however assured that no child's face would be visible on any photograph. The photos were either taken from behind (with their backs to the camera) or from their waist downwards. If any face appeared, I faded the learners' faces so that it was not recognisable. The ethical implications with regards to photographs are discussed later on (see 3.4) in detail in the section of ethical considerations.

Marvasti (2004: 64) maintains that photographs are true evidence of the reality of the occurrence that took place during the occurrence that was researched. During each opportunity to create art, I documented the findings to see whether indecisive behaviour occurred or not (cf. McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 208). I also took photographs of the learners' artwork after completion in order to derive further meaning from it. My assumption was that I would find themes in the artwork about the learners' involvement with it and the factors that contributed to their decisive and indecisiveness.



3.3.3.4 Artefacts

Artefacts encompass anything that captures a person's experience, feelings, knowledge and more (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 361). Artefacts hold clues to those who created them and can be of value for the research. As a participant-observer, I recorded my observations in a reflective journal that I refer to as a diary. During the creation of a separate artefact I reflected upon the observations I made and recorded all feelings, ideas and suggestions.

Further artefacts that I wished to collect and derive data from, were the learners' artworks. The learners were first notified and asked if I could store and photograph their artwork. The two-dimensional artwork was stored in files. Three-dimensional artwork became a problem to store so I took photos of the artwork and stored them in files on the computer. Recognition of themes and categories was facilitated because it was easier to recognise themes that arose, because the photos could easily be looked at simultaneously.

3.3.4 Data analysis

As already mentioned and motivated, the interpretivist paradigm was ideal for this research and in accordance to Maree (2007: 37) inductive data analysis was well-suited for this qualitative study. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 367) inductive data analysis is when categories and patterns from the coding of the data emerge. In qualitative research data are coded in the process of analysing the field notes and according to Creswell (2008: 251) codes support the process of understanding the data. Maree (2007: 37) states that there is not a specific or only one certain way to analyse data. Although it was time consuming, I found that doing analysis by hand was much easier and less confusing for me. Creswell (2008: 246) defined hand analysis as the process of reading the data and then to mark and divide the data by hand instead of on a computer. The transcriptions from the interviews, observations, reflective journals and photographs were all written by hand but then typed onto the computer. Coding was done by hand on the written text but then also added onto the computer.



McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 367) maintain that the process of inductive analysis is an ongoing process where the researcher can “double check” or go back to the previous stage to rectify or refine the analysis. According to Mills *et al.* (2010: 751) the most general characteristic of qualitative data analysis is that it is an ongoing and flexible process where the researcher is aware that it takes up a lot of time and effort to do. I followed the data analysis approach as portrayed in McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 368) and Creswell (2008: 244). The following figure (Figure 3.6) depicts this data analysis procedure that will be evident throughout Chapter 4:

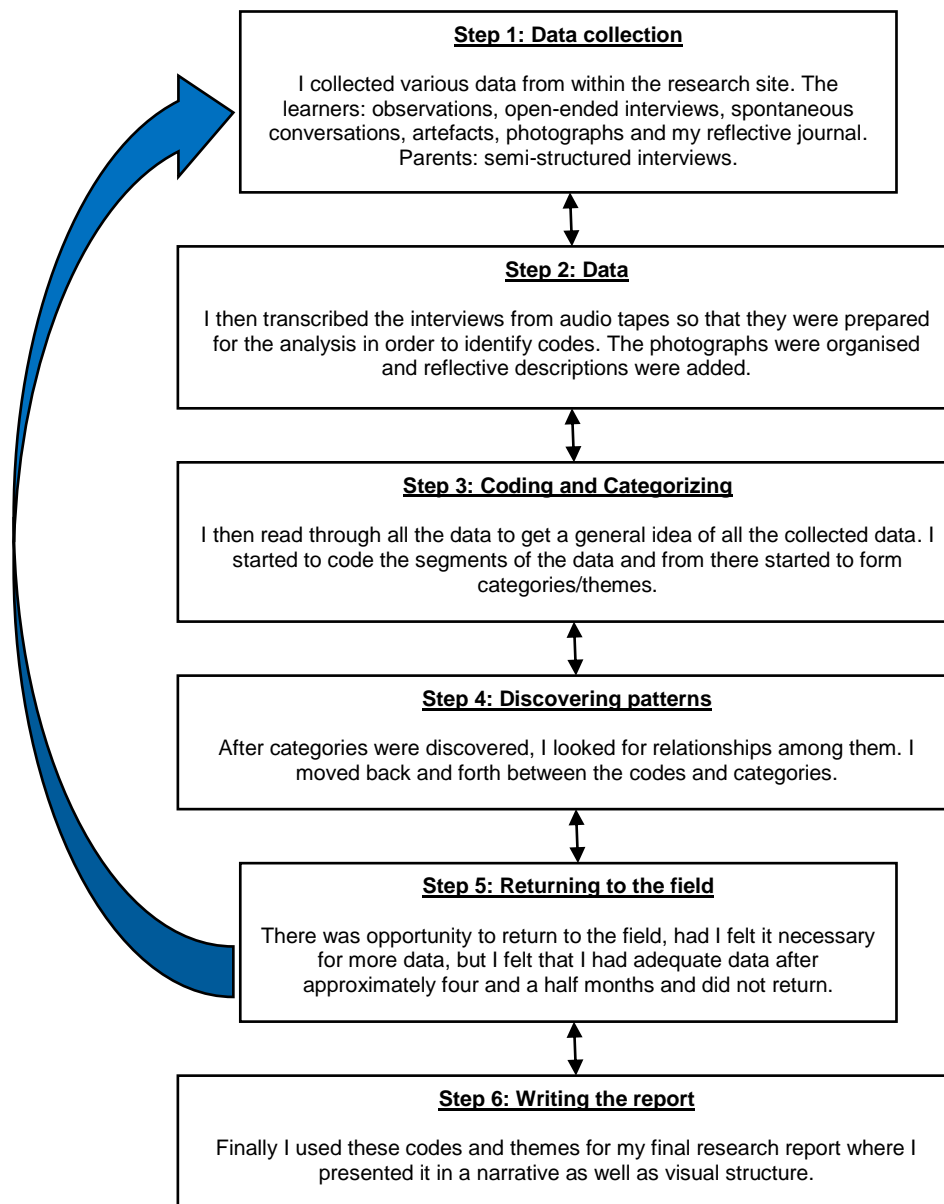


Figure 3.6: The data analysis process (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 368; Creswell, 2008: 244)



Saldana (2009: 22) suggested that, for a novice researcher, it might have been easier to use hard copies and do coding from there, before moving to a computer. At first I started to collect the learners' artwork, then sort it, store it in boxes that are labelled according to the specific dates, outcomes and projects and then analysed the data as mentioned in the steps above. It became very time consuming as well as difficult to store the physical artwork so I decided to take photographs of the artwork instead and then code it on the computer. After the data were collected, I transcribed all the interviews that were recorded on audio-tapes.

From these transcriptions I could divide the parents' responses to the semi-structured interview questions into segments and move from there to look for codes. The photographs that I took of the art-making process were organised on the computer and reflective descriptions were added where codes also emerged. The reflective journal in which I reflected upon the learners' reactions and behaviour contributed to the data. The same was done with this reflective journal as with the transcribed interviews. All transcriptions were done on the computer and stored accordingly. I needed to read through all my data numerous times to get a general idea of the data that I have gathered.

McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 367) maintain that one should look for repetitive ideas, meanings and information in the codes that could possibly form a category. All the codes were colour coded accordingly and after thorough investigation of these codes, I discovered the categories and themes in which I could place the codes. I discovered a relationship among the categories and could therefore recognise distinctive patterns. Throughout this data analysis process I could discover whether I should return to the research site to gather more data, but I was convinced that I had adequate data after the four and a half months spent in the classroom and deemed it unnecessary to return for more data.

3.3.5 Validation of the findings

According to Creswell (2008: 266) validation of data are done through various techniques in order to assure that the findings are accurate and credible. The first



aspect is trustworthiness with the focus on: transferability, credibility, dependability and conformability and secondly, triangulation is discussed:

3.3.5.1 Trustworthiness

According to Maree (2007: 80) trustworthiness is the assurance that you were true, honest and reliable with the data because in qualitative research, the researcher acted as the instrument that gathered data. The following points explain the trustworthiness of my research:

i) Transferability

Ary *et al.* (2010: 501) define transferability as follows: “Transferability is the degree to which the findings of a qualitative study can be applied or generalized to other contexts or to other groups.” Transferability is when readers can use my data results and use them in other contexts (Willis, 2007: 222). According to Ary *et al.* (2010: 501) and McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 9) transferability refers to the findings of the data that can be used and understood by others in different settings but the same context. I believe that my research contained valuable significance that could be tried in other classroom settings as well as other learning areas, activities or subjects other than visual arts. Understanding indecisiveness and the importance to address the factors that contribute to it could greatly lead to more confident learners in education.

ii) Credibility

Maree (2007: 297) maintains that credibility can best be defined as the quality of being unbiased. When the findings that the researcher has made are regarded to be correct from the data that were retrieved and does not seem to be biased. It is expected from the researcher to be truthful during and after the data collection process as well as when the findings are made (Bassey, 1999: 74). According to White (2011: 236) there are numerous ways to ensure credibility, therefore I will briefly explain how these were followed in my research:



- I made use of various data collection methods in order to cross-validate the data. This means that I compared the data (triangulation) that I found from observations, the reflective journal, photographs and interviews (Maree, 2007: 297).
- The parents of the learners were notified that they could look at my research and data at any point in time, therefore they would be able to recognise any untruths (Maree, 2007: 297).
- As a teacher I took photographs routinely of the learners as they worked in the class so that the parents could be kept up to date with what goes on inside the classroom whenever they had the need to know. Due to this, taking photographs was not new to the learners and they did not get nervous about the process. The learners knew me as their teacher and did not find this disruptive at all (Maree, 2007: 297).
- I had a reflective journal in which I jotted down observations and my own personal feelings. Through this journal I was able to recognise any biases there could have been (Mills *et al.* 2010: 242).

iii) Dependability

Dependability is a term used in qualitative research to see whether the results from one's own research could take place in other settings with different participants (Ary *et al.* 2010: 640). According to White (2011: 235) dependability is complemented by conformability.

iv) Conformability

Where the term validity is used in quantitative research, the term conformability is used in qualitative research. Conformability is when the researcher's data findings can be supported by readings and investigations of researchers who did similar studies (Ary *et al.* 2010: 638). Chapter 2 offers a broad selection of readings on all the particular facets of this study.



3.3.5.2 Triangulation

Triangulation is regarded as an approach that ensures validity and to establish trustworthiness of the data that was found through means of various methods of collecting data (Marvasti, 2004: 114). McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 374) maintain that triangulation is a way of “cross-validating” the data by comparing the different data that was found through various data collection methods. Instead of only making use of interviews with the learners and parents, I also made use of observations and then wrote down all the observations in a reflective journal as field notes. I also reflected upon the observations I made. I took photographs of the art-making process. Hatch (2007: 55) describes triangulation as making use of other methods such as theories to back up the evidence. Through the interpretation of my data in Chapter 4, triangulation is evident. Very similar to triangulation is the concept of “crystallisation”. In qualitative research, crystallisation is a way of determining internal validation of the data by comparing different data collection methods that produced data, with one another (Maree, 2007: 40). McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 366) maintain that the researcher often questions the data in order to understand it, but this study will use triangulation as means of validity assurance.

3.4 COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

Ethical standards were of particular importance in this study because the participants were minors, in other words, children under the age of 18 and ethical measures should be in place to ensure the learners’ well-being and their safety (Hedges, 2001: 3). Flewitt (2005: 565) maintains that ethical considerations are there to ensure that the researcher follows the precise rules and regulations to guarantee the participants’ safety and privacy. I followed the correct procedures of the University of Pretoria to obtain ethical clearance. My application was revised by an ethics committee and upon approval, an ethical clearance certificate was granted (**REFERENCE: EC 13/08/01 – See Appendix H**). In the following sections, the ethical measures as applied in this research are alluded to: the permission to conduct research at the particular school, the informed consent for the parents and informed assent for the learners, avoiding harm and maintaining confidentiality and



privacy throughout the whole study. The participants were selected through a purposeful sampling method and to avoid favouritism and bias, all the learners and their parents received consent and assent forms. No child was excluded because the research took place in the form of their usual daily art period.

3.4.1 Permission to conduct research at the school

Marvasti (2004: 46) contends that it would make the process of gaining access to the research site easier if the researcher already knows someone who can give access. I was already a teacher at the particular school and therefore I knew the principal who gave me permission to conduct research in my own classroom. As the school was a private institution, I had to ask written consent from the principal to conduct research. This consent form was signed by the principal and the school stamp was added as proof. Appendix A contains the consent form for the principal of the school.

3.4.2 Informed consent and assent

Informed consent is the process of providing participants with written and/or verbal instruction that should be signed or verbally consented by them and provides the participants with a general idea of what the research project is about and how privacy will be maintained throughout the study (Marvasti, 2004: 139). Creswell (2008: 159) furthermore states that it should include the importance of voluntary participation, that the participants are in no danger of harm and that their privacy and identity will be protected. For the purpose of my research project, the parents were given a consent form (Appendix C) where the research process was explained as well as my assurance that no harm would come to their children. The parents also received the assurance that their children would not be obligated to participate in the study and could withdraw at any point of time.

As the learners were under the age of 18, and not old enough to give their own consent for the research, the parents had to sign the consent form to give me permission to use their children as participants and the learners themselves also had to give their permission which is known as assent (Flewitt, 2005: 555). The assent



form (Appendix B) consisted of a column containing pictures for the learners to look at as well as with a column that had a verbal description of the research. This information I conveyed to the learners with the parents present. I explained on the young learners' level that they did not have to take part in the study if they did not want to and even if they were already part and wanted to withdraw. Flewitt (2005: 559) asserts that a young child can give his/her permission through a drawing or just mark making. At the end of the assent form, which I created for the learners, I included a smiley face with thumbs up and a sad looking face showing thumbs down. I explained to the learners that the "happy" face meant that they wanted to be participants and that the "sad" face meant that they did not want to be participants. Upon their decision whether to participate or not they just had to circle the face that expressed their decision.

Both the parents and their children were assured that their children as well as their own identity and privacy would be protected by means of using pseudonyms and that no child's face would be recognisable in photographs in order to maintain their privacy. A copy of the assent and consent form appears in the Appendices B and C. It was explained to the parents that all the data that was retrieved from this study would be kept safely in the Early Childhood Development department of the University of Pretoria for a period of approximately 15 years as stated by the university's policy requirements.

3.4.3 Avoiding harm

It is important that the participants know and understand that they have "power" during the research process, which includes power to retreat from the research at any point of time and power that they are individuals whose privacy will not be invaded and publicised (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 335). In order to avoid harm and to protect the learners' rights as minors, the parents were asked permission (consent) in order for the researcher to use learners as participants during the study (Hatch, 2007: 168). I asked the parents written and verbal consent to use their children as my research participants. They were informed that all the activities necessary for the research were still part of the daily programme and thus part of



their enrolled education at the school. Therefore if I did not use all the learners for the study, no one was neglected because everyone took part in art activities. The research, its process as well as the outcomes intended, were discussed with them so that they were fully aware of what was to happen. They were also informed that they could withdraw their children from the research process at any time.

3.4.4 Maintaining confidentiality and privacy

Marvasti (2004: 138) defines confidentiality as the way in which the participants' identity and privacy are protected from harm. According to McMillan and Schumacher

(2010: 339) confidentiality is when no participant's identity is revealed and that the researcher rather makes use of pseudonyms or code names to refer to the particular participants in the study. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the parents and to maintain their privacy I referred to them as the learner's mother or father. The learners' names were changed to fictitious names, so that the data could not be linked back to the particular learner or their parents.

Working with the learners as a teacher as well as conducting research simultaneously was a very rewarding procedure. The longer the study carried on, the more excited I became, because I realised the relevance of my research for other preschool and Foundation Phase settings. Apart from the observations that I made, taking photographs was also very rewarding as one could see that what was witnessed, captured in a picture.

3.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter give a detailed description of the research methodology that I have used to explore learners' indecisiveness during visual arts in the Foundation Phase. A qualitative study allowed me to make use of various data collection methods in order to collect data for the problem I wished to research. Being a participant observer allowed me into the lives of young learners during visual arts and I was



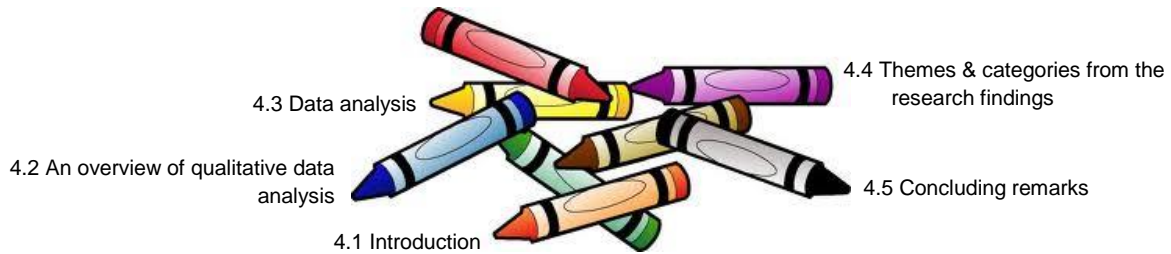
able to capture valuable moments without disturbing the teaching process. The multiple case studies made me focus on the phenomenon at hand as well as see how the interviews with the parents contributed to the factors that inhibit young learners' choices. The data that was collected through the various collection methods is presented, analysed and interpreted in Chapter 4.

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CHAPTER 4

Data analysis and research findings



4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the data that were collected for this study are discussed. Chapter 3 explained who the participants were and how the data were collected, outlined, analysed and interpreted. This study followed a qualitative approach and therefore the analysis of qualitative data are discussed first. The duration of the study was approximately four and a half months. I identified the participants during the first couple of weeks at the beginning of the school year, after which the participants were asked assent and their parents' consent. Valuable data were retrieved from both the learners and their parents and their participation supported the research in order to answer the research questions for this paper.

To begin with, the biographical information of the participants is provided in colour coded tables. This information is labelled as the profiles for each learner. The following subdivisions highlight the analysis of the data about the learner's home environment, their disposition and their behaviour.

4.2 AN OVERVIEW OF QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

A multiple case study was followed to see why some Foundation Phase learners experienced indecisiveness in the classroom during visual arts activities. Five participants were selected through purposeful sampling: four of them who showed indecisive behaviour and one learner who showed decisive behaviour (see 3.3.1.2). Observation, spontaneous conversations, open-ended interviews, photographs and



a reflective journal supported the data findings and further semi-structured interviews with the parents of these five learners also contributed to the corpus of the data.

I read through all the data numerous times in order to make sure that I had a comprehensive overview, discovered codes from within the segments of the data and labelled them according to a colour coding scheme (cf. Creswell, 2008: 251). I realised that I had a great deal of codes and started to compare the codes with one another to see which ones belonged together and could be categorised. (Ary *et al.* 2010: 484). McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 343) guided my knowledge to discover patterns from the relationships between the categories. Figure 4.1 portrays the process from where the data were coded, then formed into categories and finally into patterns.

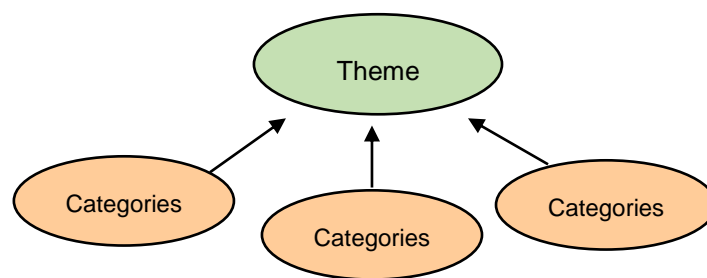


Figure 4.1: Schematic illustration of creating themes (Extracted from Creswell, 2006: 373)

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS

I made use of inductive data analysis. This qualitative data analysis method allowed me to look for codes within the segments of the data whereupon I could develop categories (also known as themes) and look for relationships among them that created patterns (cf. McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 364). This study followed a multiple-case study as described in Chapter 3 (3.2.3) therefore I will discuss each participants' case separately; first the decisive participant, followed by the four indecisive participants. For the protection of the learners I used pseudonyms instead of their real names. Each participant is depicted in a different colour so that each one can be identified in that particular way throughout the data representation. The information of these profiles was retrieved from the interviews with the parents. Interview questions and responses can be easily identified that corresponds with that



particular learner with references in accordance to their specific colour. The participant's biographical information, the interviews with the parents, observational and field text data, and the participant's behaviour in the classroom in general as well as the participant's behaviour during visual arts activities are discussed.

4.3.1 Participant A: **Golokile**

Golokile was the participant that showed decisive behaviour. I described her case first because her decisiveness set the standard to communicate what learners of the age five to six are capable of achieving.

i) **Biographical description of the cases**

Table 4.1: Child A: **Golokile – girl (decisive in class)**

	<u>Biographical information</u>
Home language	Xhosa
Chronological age when study commenced	Five years and 10 months
At school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Through observation she seemed to have a lot of self-confidence. ▪ She could speak English fluently
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ She has a set routine at home ▪ The mother makes use of physical punishment to discipline
Sibling/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One sister who is ten years older
Parents' marital status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Single mother
Parents' occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mother is a team leader at SARS

At the start of the school year, I took time to observe the learners in my class. It did not take me long to identify Golokile as a very decisive learner. Golokile started preschool at the age of three years, although she only started Grade R at the preschool as identified for this study in Chapter 3 (See 3.3.1.1). Golokile's mother was very interested in this research study from the beginning. She kept to the arranged date for the interview and provided me a lot of detailed answers to the interview questions. During the interview, it became evident that Golokile's father did not form part of her life, but that Golokile's mother played a very influential and



positive role in Golokile's life. Although she is a single parent Golokile's mother has a strong opinion about the way she raises her children. Values are held in a very high regard by the mother and she wishes to educate her children according to a respected set of values. Golokile is fortunate to have a warm and loving mother who exerts herself to provide in the needs of her children.

Golokile has a sibling 10 years older than her. They are not close in age, but they have a very tight bond because the sister takes over the role of the mother when the mother has to go away on business trips. The mother believes in a sound routine at home for Golokile as she believes that it ensures discipline and structure in Golokile's life. The routine consists of the following:

- Arriving home from school
- Eating a light meal
- Having play time with friends within the estate where they live or playing outside in the garden/ play with toys inside the house
- Having dinner together
- Taking a bath
- Going to bed

The mother makes use of physical punishment to discipline her children as she feels that talking alone does not convey the message they have to learn after doing something she did not approve of. Golokile's mother felt that children should be allowed to make own choices as this allows her, as parent, to understand her own child better.

ii) Interviews with the parents

All the interviews that were held were semi-structured interviews. This allowed for questions, which arose from the original question, to be asked. Judging from Golokile's mother, Golokile has always been a child with a strong personality and that she, Golokile, takes after the mother. Golokile's mother has a strong personality:



Interview entry: Golokile's mother

Researcher: "Is Golokile sometimes dominated by the older sister, or can Golokile, stand her own ground?"

Golokile's mother: "Um... I think Golokile is sort of um... she likes attention. Actually the sister would have to listen to Golokile..."

Researcher: "Why do you think she's got such a strong personality? Or what do you think contributes to her having such a strong personality?"

Golokile's mother: "I think from me... Personally her father is very quiet. He is not someone that talks too much. But with me, I'm someone that if something's wrong I address it immediately and if I have to shout, I shout immediately and after that, if I did it overboard then I'll sit down with my kids and say: "Okay, I know it was too harsh, but it was wrong. So I think somewhere, somehow she got that personality from me."

After identifying Golokile for this study, I contemplated whether she was also at ease among other people outside her home environment. Therefore I added this as a question to my list of my addressed topics. Golokile's mother explained that Golokile was very comfortable with unfamiliar people as well as familiar people outside her home environment:

Interview entry: Golokile's mother

Researcher: "How does Golokile act in the presence of strangers? Or people outside your home environment?"

Golokile's mother: "Golokile is very accommodative. It's like... but ten minutes... five minutes minutes is enough for her to look at a person and study a person and after that she'll just... she's then fine with everyone. Whether you are a boy or a girl. Whether you are older than her or smaller than her, she accommodated all the... the ages of people. Or like the friends in her group age... But I think 5 – 10 minutes is enough for Golokile and sometimes she will go with my friends, like go sleep over and I'll never get a call where they say: "Golokile's been crying or Golokile has been asking for her mum" or whatever. She has never done that. She only cries when I'm not at home and she'll say: "Mommy I miss you." That is the only thing that she... yeah..."

Although Golokile is already very decisive and a confident young learner, her mother is very keen on it staying that way as well as to support Golokile all the way. It is



clear that her child's future is very important to her and that she only wants the best for Golokile:

Interview entry: Golokile's mother

Researcher: "What would it mean to you if Golokile could be more decisive? I can see in the class, she is very decisive, you know, she can make her own choices and give her own opinions, but what would it mean to you if she could be even more decisive and confident?"

Golokile's mother: "That would be great! That would be really great! That's what we are looking at as parents. You look for the positive things to happen in life to your kids or to yourself. That would be really great and it will not mean that I will sit back and say: "Okay, my child can do everything". I'll have to support her in whatever way that I need to support her."

Looking at how the mother described Golokile, I was able to identify a close bond between the mother and her child because even though Golokile has a strong personality, she is affected when her mother is not around and away on business trips. Their warm and loving relationship is characterised by two-way communication as they feel comfortable to express their feelings without fear of rejection.

Interview entry: Golokile's mother

Researcher: "As a mom, how would you describe Golokile?"

Golokile's mother: "Golokile is very warm. Very warm. She's a loving person. Golokile like... I used to travel a lot last year and I would sit down with them and say: "Golokile, Zanele, mommy's travelling. I'm coming back on Monday" and then she (Golokile) will give me a hug and she'll tell me: "Mommy I love you." She'll tell me: "Mommy I'll miss you" and after two days she'll go through the phone or go through the photos that we've got in the house and she'll start crying or she'll call me: "Mommy I miss you. When are you coming back?" She is very comfortable. If I introduce her to my friends, the next time when she sees my friends, she will run and just give them a hug saying: "I miss you. I love you."



This question allowed me to learn more about Golokile and how she is at home. Golokile takes a lot of interest in things happening in and around her home environment and is always craving new knowledge to feed her inquisitive mind.

Interview entry: Golokile's mother

Researcher: "Does Golokile ask a lot of questions at home, so would you say she's inquisitive?"

Golokile's mother: "(Laughs). A lot! A lot! And you must choose what you say to Golokile because Golokile, she will ask something you answer... you'll give her an answer... after four months or six months or the following year she will ask you the very same question and then you give a different answer and she'll say: "But Mommy, you said 1... 2... 3..." Yesterday um... I was going to a meeting at church so I told them that I will come by tomorrow... "Where are you going?" I'm going to church. "To do what?" To a meeting... "What meeting?" Okay Nanna, remember I'm an executive community member. "Okay, oh, what time are you coming back?" So she will always have those questions and if I say to them I'm going to a funeral... "Where? Who passed away? Why? Was she sick?" And she will ask relevant questions. If you tell her about funerals she will ask you about the funeral. "Was she sick? Where did she stay?" and all those things. If you tell her about church: "Okay Mommy, are you going to a prayer meeting? Why don't you take me with you? Because you normally take me with." So you can't tell her about church and then she'll tell you about McDonalds or going to the mall or going shopping. She will stay with the topic."

This interview allowed me to learn a side of Golokile, from her mother's perspective, and how Golokile is outside the school environment. I felt this important as to provide me with indications on whether there are external factors that contribute to her decisiveness in the classroom.

iii) Observational and field text data

Observations allowed me to look at Golokile's behaviour inside the classroom and how she interacts with other learners without interrupting. These observations were jotted down in a journal and the entries from this journal are referred to as "field text entries". I reflected upon the observations in a separate reflective journal and all entries in this chapter from this reflective journal are referred to as "diary entries".



Spontaneous conversations and open-ended interviews with the learners also took place but they will be referred to as “interview entries”.

The very first art activity for this study that was conducted, was based on the theme of “My body and I”. The initial idea was to give the learners a variety of art materials that they could choose from and the instruction of creating themselves with the chosen materials. The materials were placed on a table and the learners were allowed to approach this table as many times as they wanted to. Upon giving the learners this instruction, Golokile was the first learner to approach the table and choose materials for her artwork without hesitation:

Field text entry - Golokile:

She immediately jumped up and took a magazine, toilet rolls, scissor and glue. She was the first one to start.

Through observation I could see that Golokile had a very strong and decisive personality. I was surprised at the self-confidence of five-to-six-year-old learner who displayed such immense self-confidence when reacting to an instruction allowing her so much freedom of choice:

Diary entry - Golokile:

Golokile seemed very confident from the beginning. She never came to me after I explained the first time how the project was to take place and she immediately went to the table and took items as if she already knew what and how she wants to create her artwork.

It became evident early on in the study that Golokile was not scared or hesitant to ask me things or to do something different in the classroom:

Field text entry - Golokile:

Out of her own Golokile asked if she could use the easel for her drawing. She seemed very confident to ask me if she could rather use the easel instead of sitting by the table and didn't even ask me to help her stick the paper onto the easel.



During one art activity, the theme of the week was “Different houses”. Based upon this theme, I read the learners the story of “The three little pigs” as it depicted three different types of houses that each little pig built. As side-activities for the day’s artwork, the learners could create their own house on paper. At first Golokile created a beautiful house and during a spontaneous conversation, I asked her the following:

Interview entry: Golokile

Researcher: “What type of house are you making?”

Golokile: “A straw house.”

Researcher: “Why do you want to make a straw house?”

Golokile: “Because I want to make the wolf come and blow down the straw house.”

A while later I saw that Golokile pasted strips of paper over her “straw house” and in a way it spoiled her first attempt of creating a house, but I decided to ask her about it:

Researcher: “I see that you are sticking papers over your straw house. Why did you decide to do that Golokile?”

Golokile: “So that I can make my house even stronger for when the wolf comes to blow it.”

I was quick to think that Golokile was spoiling her artwork when she started pasting strips of paper over her first attempt. When asking her about her artwork, it was clear that she had a solid idea of what she wanted to do. At first she wanted to create a straw-house so that the wolf from the story was able to “blow the house down”, but after some thinking, she decided to make her house “stronger” so that the wolf would *not* be able to blow the house down. Golokile’s way of creating a “stronger” house was to stick more papers on top of one another, as to her it became stronger. This made me realise that as an adult I was quick to forget that young learners think differently than what we, as adults, do and that through Golokile’s process of thinking, she was able to express herself and her ideas. I could easily have suppressed her feelings and behaviour had I acted differently, thinking that she was spoiling her artwork:



Diary entry - Golokile:

Golokile did not hesitate to start with her project. Although she started off with one idea (making a straw house that the wolf can blow down) she later chose to make her house “stronger”. I was quick to think that Golokile was being silly about her artwork, but I came to realise that there was an ongoing thinking-process and that there was a reason behind her sticking papers all over her almost finished artwork. I realised that she was thinking in the way a child would think and I did not realise that at first. She was never once hesitant and was talkative and excited throughout the project.

Most of the time Golokile preferred to sit next to friends of hers. She would interact with her friends with ease and was never hesitant to help them when they struggled:

Field text entry - Golokile:

Golokile sat next to her friend and the two of them spoke about their work: Golokile: “I’m going to colour this cow black and white and the other one brown and white.” Jada: “Yeah, you know I once saw a real brown and white one.”

iv) The participant’s behaviour in the classroom in general

At the beginning of the school year, while I still observed the learners in my classroom for possible participants of the study, I identified Golokile very quickly as a decisive learner. She is extremely talkative and not shy to speak in front of a whole class full of learners. Golokile has a very bubbly personality and does not let anything get her down. I noticed that during discussions she would be quick to raise her hand to speak, answer questions or motivate why she does or does not agree with something:

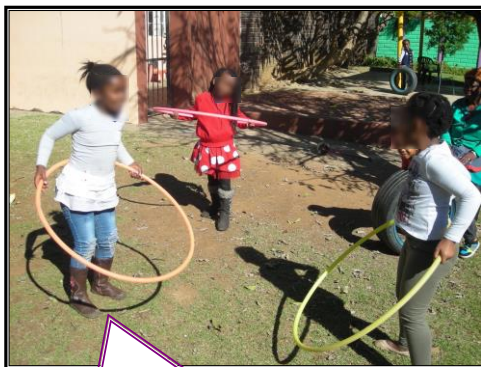
Field text entry - Golokile:

Golokile is very talkative during theme discussions and is not scared to ask questions or to participate. She can also raise her own opinion upon new information as well as argue about things that she disagrees with. There are times when I have to ask Golokile to give another learner a chance as well.



Golokile was not only decisive during class activities alone, but also during other activities, for example when playing with her friends outside. She could easily decide what toys or apparatus she wanted to play with. She was always part of a group of friends instead of playing all by herself and when disagreements between her and a friend existed, she had self-confidence to sort it out by herself.

Hula hooping with friends



Golokile is a very outgoing girl who enjoys interacting with other learners.

When she arrived in the Grade R class at the start of the year, she immediately made friends, whereas other learners were still very emotional being in a new school environment.

Bubble blowing



Golokile would participate in any activity with ease and confidence. She had no difficulty in choosing what she wanted to do.

Figure 4.2: Golokile playing with her friends outside

No activities seemed too difficult, neither did they scare Golokile. She took each opportunity in her stride and thoroughly enjoyed them all. Her self-confidence was evident because she participated in every discussion in class and would often give her own opinion. This behaviour was unmistakably noticeable during the creation of her own artwork.

v) The participant's behaviour during visual arts activities

Golokile enjoyed visual art activities tremendously. She was never once hesitant to create artwork or scared to interact with other learners throughout the process. Whenever an instruction for art was given, Golokile would know straightaway what to do. She would not ask me if she was *allowed* to do something in a certain way or



how she was to go about her art. Golokile could speak with self-confidence about her work and easily describe what she was doing with her artwork. She took own choice-making with regard to her artwork in her stride (see Figure 4.3).

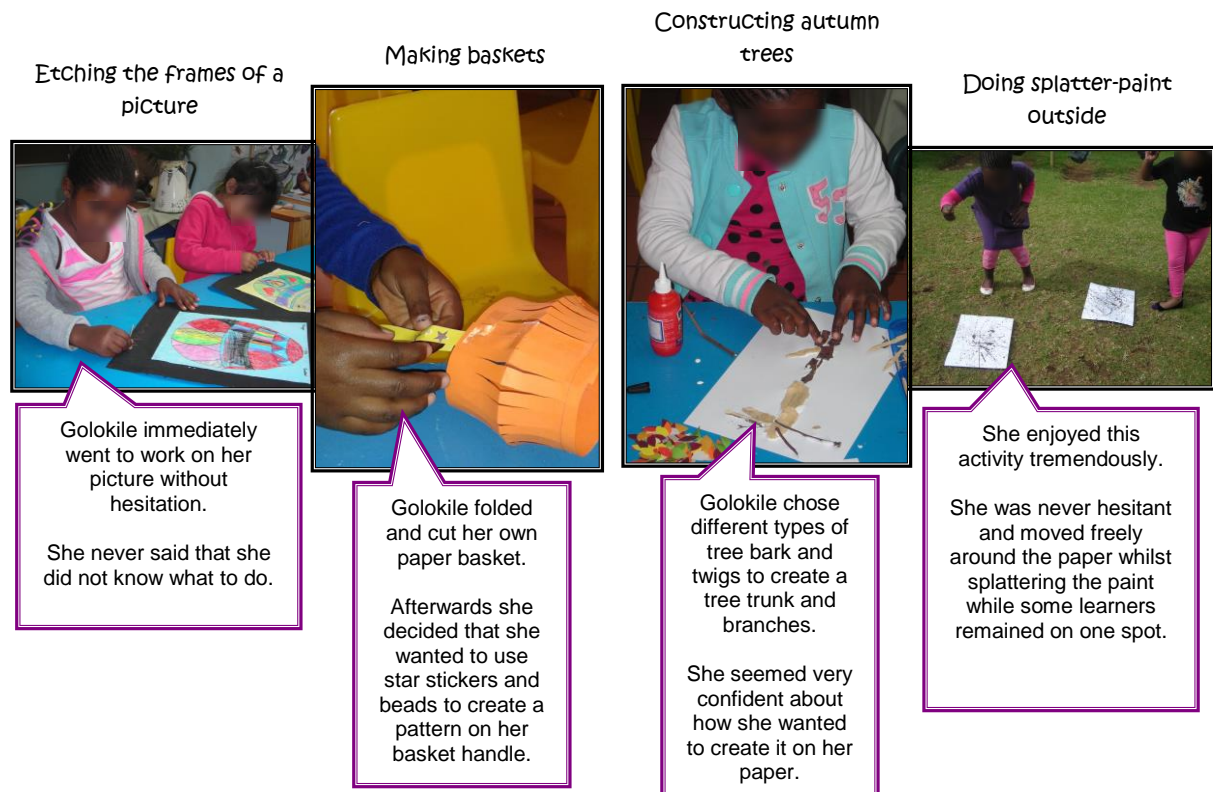


Figure 4.3: Golokile showing decisive behaviour during the art-making process

During one activity, as described earlier on, the learners made their own houses based upon the story of “The three little pigs”. Figure 4.4 depicts how Golokile chose materials for the picture she wanted to make as well how she was busy constructing it. The final photograph was her version of a “straw” house that she decided to make “stronger” so that the wolf could not blow it down. Through Golokile’s description and explanation of why she made her house that way, it is evident that she is a decisive learner. She showed no behaviour of fear or hesitance and this allowed Golokile to experience so much through only this one piece of artwork. She was able to share her thoughts, speak her mind as well as thoroughly enjoy artwork that was completely her own.

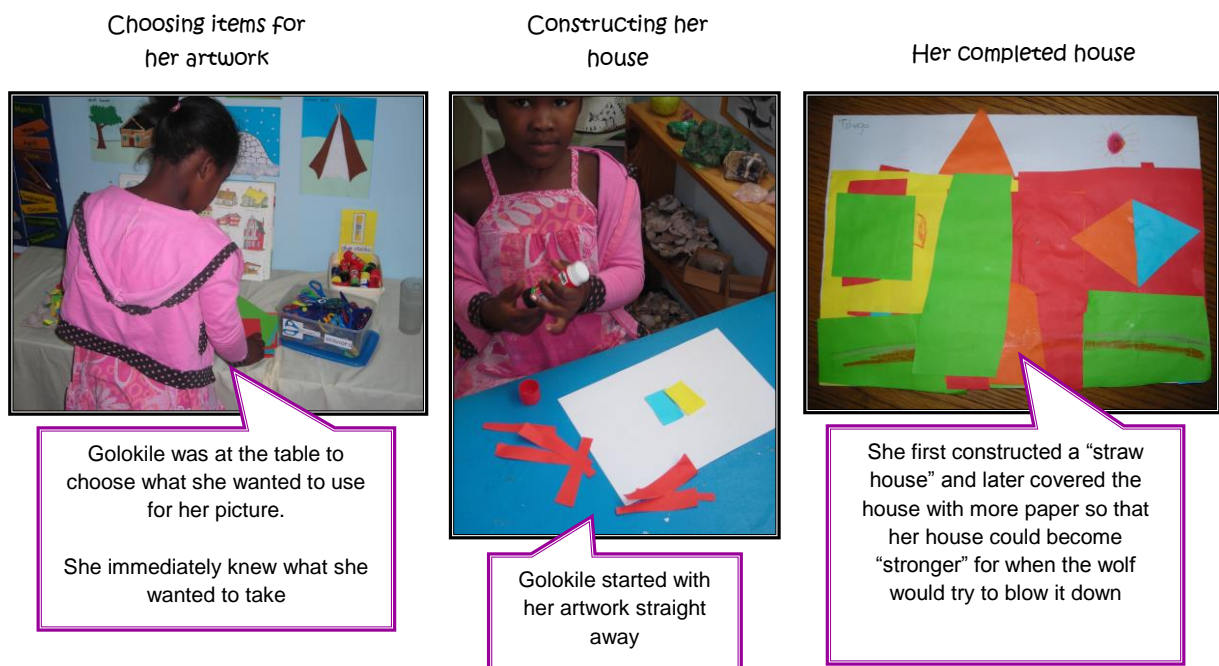


Figure 4.4: Golokile creating a house through making own choices

Through the interview with Golokile's mother as well as observations, spontaneous conversations and photographs, the data retrieved proved Golokile to be a decisive learner. Her home environment gave her a solid foundation of warmth and self-confidence and this clearly is portrayed in the classroom as well.

4.3.2 Participant B: Leago

Since the school is small and accommodates only a few learners, it is quite easy to know all the learners from other classes as well. Leago was a learner at this school the previous year as well and I knew that she was a very self-conscious learner that lacked self-confidence through observation and conversations with the other teachers. During the first couple of weeks in my classroom, it became clear that she was indecisive and therefore became a participant of this study.



i) Biographical description of the cases

Table 4.2: Child B: **Leago** – girl (indecisive in class)

	<u>Biographical Information</u>
Home language	Sotho/English
Chronological age when study commenced	Five years and eight months
At school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Through observation she seemed to have little self-confidence. ▪ Could speak English fluently
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Has a set routine at home ▪ The nanny takes care of her at home ▪ Mother often works away from home - China ▪ Parents make use of physical punishment but reverted to a talking-method of discipline
Sibling/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ She has two stepsisters: Oldest sister - eight years older; Middle sister - two years older
Parents' marital status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Married
Parents' occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mother = Auditor and designer ▪ Father = Businessman

Leago was one of the first learners that I observed being indecisive, withdrawn and hesitant in the classroom. She made an ideal candidate for this study and her parents were very excited about the prospect as well. Observation enabled me to understand her better and I quickly came to realise that Leago is a perfectionist, thus wanting her work to be perfect and this statement was supported by the mother during the interview. Although Leago herself gave me assent, she remained an indecisive learner for a long period of the study. Leago's mother is an auditor but is busy opening her own boutique as she is a part-time designer. She often goes to China to buy materials and are away from home a lot. This is the mother's first marriage but her father's second, with two older daughters from his first marriage. According to the mother, Leago and her sister, who is two years older than her, are forever in competition with one another.

Leago's mother came from a very traditional family where it was expected from her to study Accounting, something with which she is not happy with today. She said that as a young person it was expected from her to study Accounting and that is what



she did and clearly she is not happy with that decision today. She also mentioned that it was not something that only *her* parents expected but that her grandparents wanted the same for her parents. Leago's mother made it clear that she wants to break that chain of imposed decisions and wants her own daughter to be able to one day choose an occupation herself that she will be happy in.

ii) Interviews with the parents

Leago's parents showed a keen interest in this research study and were more than willing to give their consent for Leago's participation in the study as well as have an interview with me. As it turned out, only Leago's mother managed to turn up for the arranged interview. The interview with the mother was my longest interview of all the participating parents and she really put a lot of effort into answering the questions I asked. She was very open and honest about how she raises Leago as well as about the indifferences between her and her daughter.

Leago's mother or father picks her up from school around 17:00 in the afternoons. The parents make use of an assistant that helps to prepare Leago's food and she baths her. It seems as if there is little time that the mother spends with her daughter once they arrive home from school, because the helper does it for her and by the time all this is done, it is time for Leago to go to bed.

Interview entry: Leago's mother

Researcher: "Do you guys have a routine, when you get home from work and school?"

Leago's mother: "... I've got a helper to um... to bath her. So they go to the bathroom to bath her and after that um... she prepares her food. When we get home she must be fed. She (the helper) prepares her food, takes it up to the table (Leago takes her own food to the table). She knows she has to go to um... her small table and chair to sit down and eat... fetch the food from the tray, sit down and eat afterwards take the tray to the kitchen, yeah. So that's what she does... and afterwards she knows at eight o'clock it's sleeping time."

Something very interesting that became clear from the interview with Leago's mother, was her dominating and authoritative attitude towards her daughter. There were quite a few entries that showed how Leago's mother raises her child:



Interview entry: Leago's mother

Researcher: "So how do you discipline Leago if she did something you know, wrong or something that you didn't like?"

Leago's mother: "Usually I beat her but the last time... After I gave her a beating I was like: "What did I do?" I hit her so hard that she told me: "I want my daddy right now." And I could feel that she's like, you know, hurt... So the thing with her it's... when I talk, I always repeat things. I won't say it once, and keep quiet. I'll tell her: "You know what, don't do this every day, look at your hair... Why am I supposed to tell you this Leago? No, no, no, no, Leago, no, no, no, no..." Like yesterday, she said to me: "You said that already. Why do you have to say that again?" And you know, with me I feel she has to keep quiet when I say those to her."

Researcher: "Now Leago... does she ask a lot of questions? Do you see her as inquisitive?"

Leago's mother: "She is entirely like that! If she can just keep quiet!"

Researcher: "Do you two do things together, you know, like mother-daughter time?"

Leago's mother: "She doesn't like... I love going to the malls and she hates it. She hates going to the mall because she says: "Mommy's shopping, shopping, shopping all the time!""

Leago's mother made it clear during the interview, that Leago is a perfectionist and does not like it when, whatever she attempts, is not done satisfactorily, according to her own standards and opinion. It seems that a lot of frustration builds up inside her when she cannot do something to perfection and it made me wonder if Leago is scared of her mother's reaction due to the fact that her mother is very dominating.

Interview entry: Leago's mother

Researcher: "How do you describe Leago, you know... her personality?"

Leago's mother: "...she want to do things perfect. I have seen with her previously. If she can try something and she sees it is not how she wants it, she gets so frustrated."

Though the interview was very interesting and informative, it did leave me with many thoughts of my own, wondering if the mother's behaviour could have an influence on Leago's overall behaviour in the classroom.



iii) Observational and field text data

Leago was a quiet and withdrawn learner who was often hesitant about her artwork during visual art activities. There were numerous occasions where she showed fear of using different types of art materials and preferred to use materials that she was comfortable and familiar with. When I asked her about this and why she did not try other available material, she would mention that she was scared to use them:

Interview entry: Leago

Researcher: “Why did you choose to draw yourself with crayons?”

Leago: “Because I thought that it would be much harder with the other materials.”

Researcher: “Do you think you are a little scared to try the other materials?”

Leago: “Uh Hu...”

During a particular theme of “Wild animals” I read the learners a story called: “How the elephant got his trunk” by Andrea Florens and Angela Sinclair. As a side activity, the learners could choose any scene from the story and create it either through painting or drawing it. Although there was a choice for the learners, whether to use paint or crayons, Leago opted for crayons again, but this time round she was hesitant to start because she did not think that she could create one of the scenes from the story:

Diary entry - Leago

Leago’s first reaction was that of hesitation. I had to motivate her to get started and after she took a paper and crayons she said: “I don’t think that I can do this.”

After the interview I had with Leago’s mother (as mentioned earlier), I often thought about her child-rearing style and how it could possibly have affected Leago’s personality and her behaviour:

Field text entry - Leago

Leago is still scared to use the other materials. When I asked her why she didn’t make use of the other materials, her reply was that she was not sure if she could do it. I sometimes wonder if Leago is scared that when her work is



not perfect, she will get shouted at or get into trouble, but it takes a lot of motivation to make her understand that she won't get into trouble. I still can't help wonder to wonder if she is forced to being perfect at home.

Throughout the period that research was conducted, I noticed that Leago was more indecisive with regards to her artwork than toward other activities in and outside the classroom.

iv) The participant's behaviour in the classroom in general

It was interesting to observe Leago in and outside of the classroom. At the beginning of the school year she was a quiet and withdrawn young learner but with time, as she got familiar with the new learners and new classroom, and she even made very close friends. She started talking and interacting more with other learners:

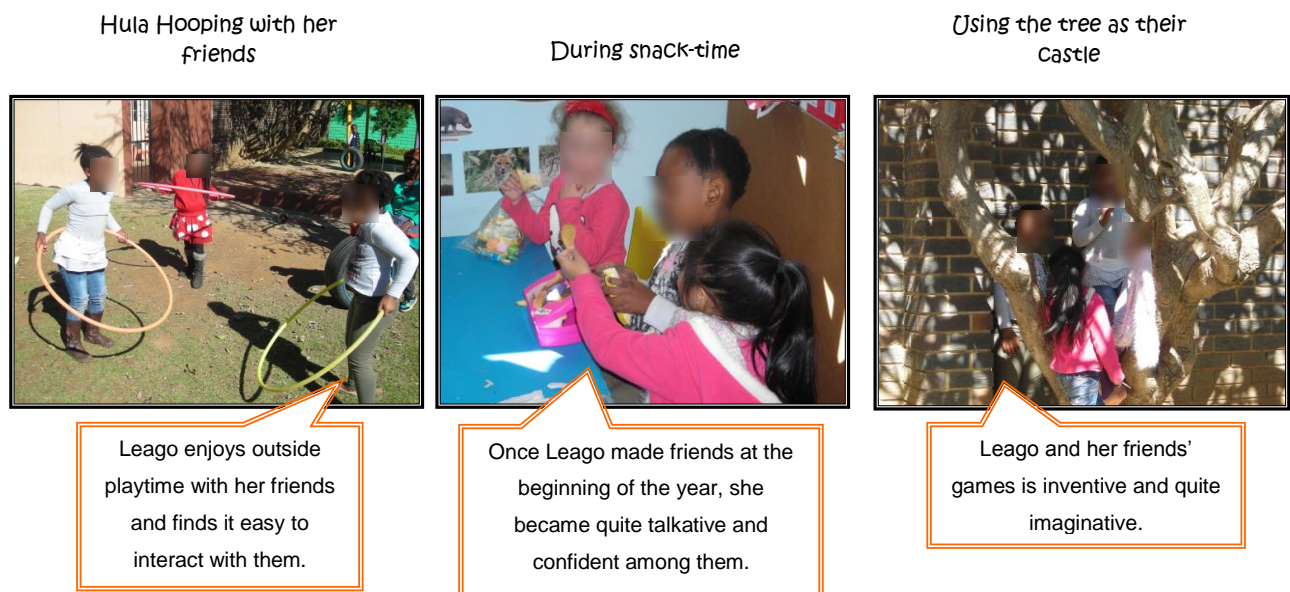


Figure 4.5: Leago among her friends in- and outside the classroom

During artwork Leago preferred to work by herself, but during activities other than art, Leago seemed to be another learner. She would talk with confidence, interact with learners in confident ways that she does not display during art activities.



v) The participant's behaviour during visual arts activities

Leago was an indecisive participant that was very afraid to try different art materials for creating her artwork and often kept to a medium that she was comfortable and familiar with. Although it was still her own choice, I could see how a simple choice influenced her self-confidence in the classroom. She would often say that she could not do it, but with constant motivation, she always succeeded in the end:

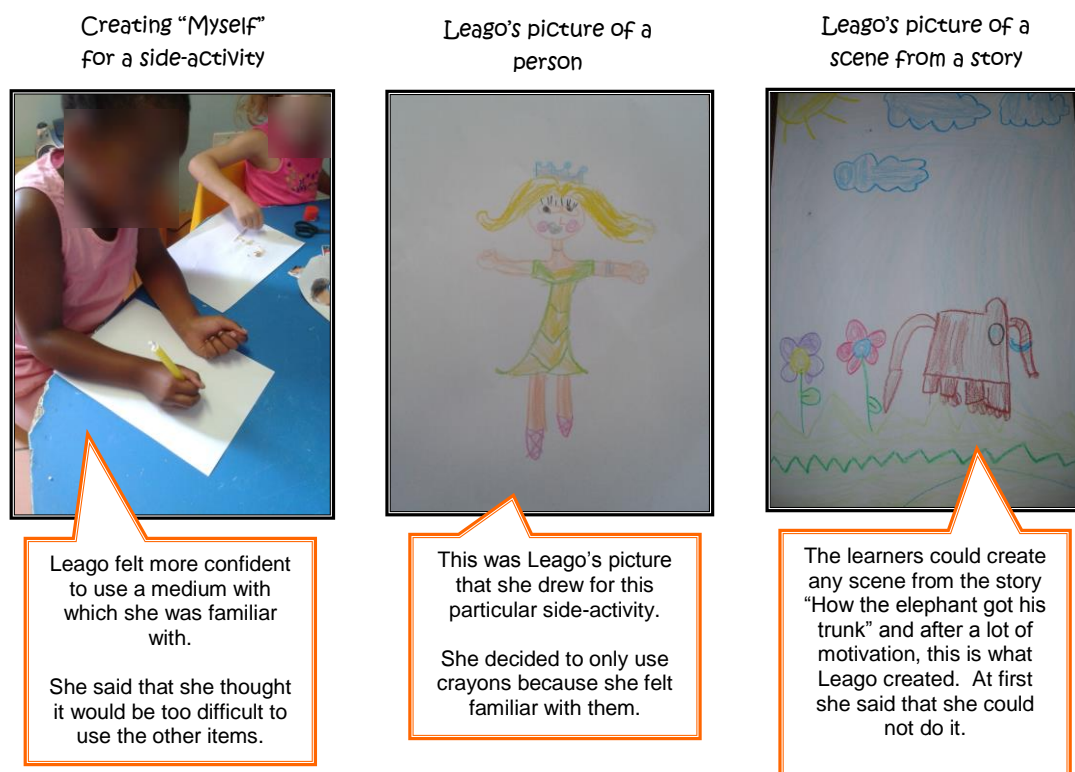


Figure 4.6: Leago's insecurity to make use of other art materials

Leago lacked a lot of self-confidence when the study commenced. She easily admitted her fear of using art materials unknown to her and it was evident that she was scared that her work might not be good enough. I realised that Leago was in fact an emotional learner, who needed constant motivation and praise for her work in order to convince her that her work was beautifully done. Leago started showing more confident behaviour which in turn led to more decisive behaviour through constant opportunities to be able to make her own choices and efforts from others to motivate her to make choices:

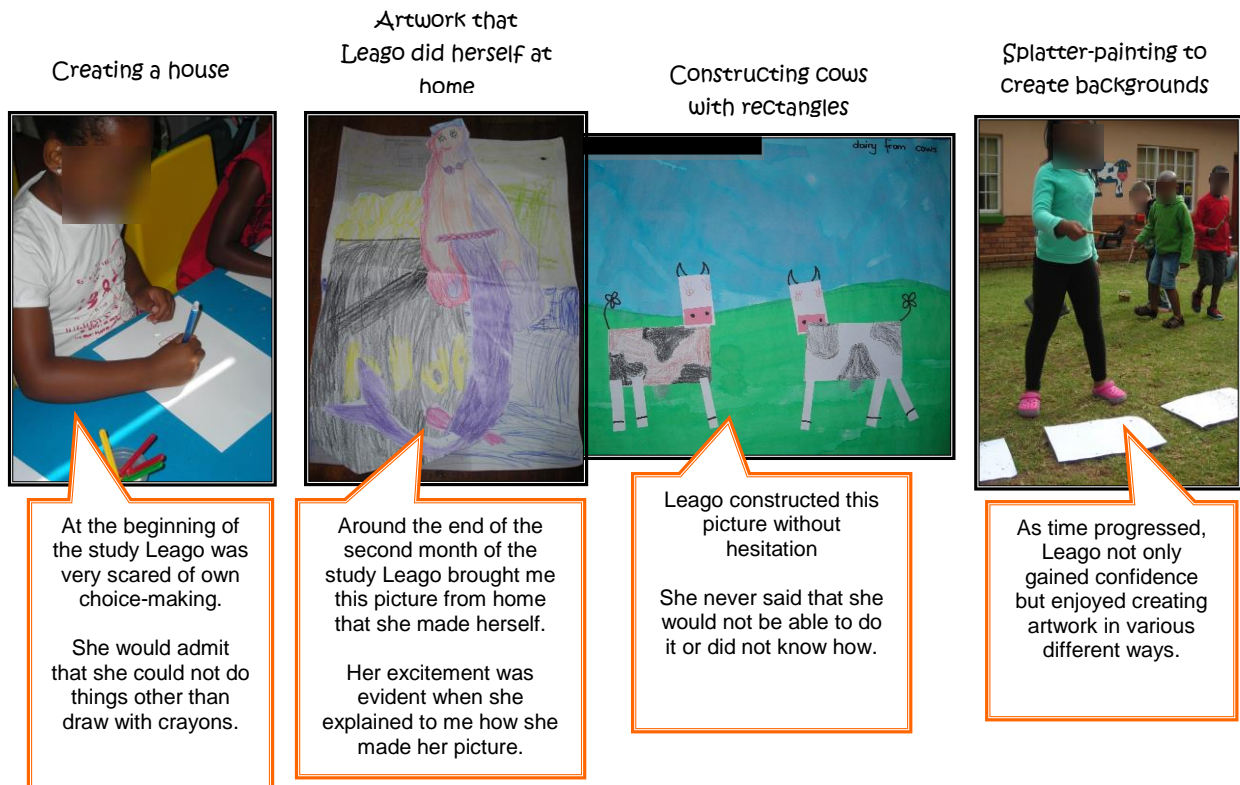


Figure 4.7: Leago became more decisive over time

Field text entry - Leago

I see that Leago is referring more to her artwork as “my work” instead of as just “the artwork”. She seems very proud of her own work lately and comes to “show it off” more readily.

On numerous occasions I deliberately divided the learners in pairs or small groups of three where at least one decisive learner was present. My aim was to see whether group work could assist indecisive learners. I was astounded to see how more confident Leago was during group work. It was evident that Leago was more at ease and relaxed when she worked together among her friends.

During the theme “autumn” the learners had to paint an autumn tree together in pairs. Leago and her friend discussed the picture and together they decided who would paint what. The same went for the small-group project about drawing a farm picture. Leago had more self-confidence when she was with other learners:

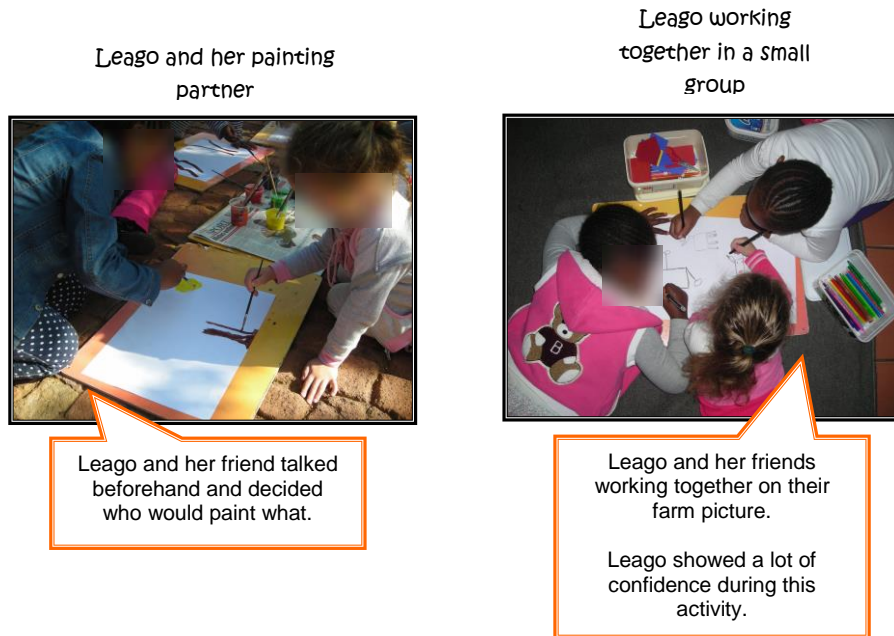


Figure 4.8: Leago showed more decisive behaviour through social-interaction with decisive learners

After constant motivation and giving Leago opportunities to make her own choices with regard to her own artwork, she started to become a relaxed learner who enjoyed her work as well as education itself, because fear did not hold her back anymore.

4.3.3 Participant C: **Mindy**

Mindy started at this preschool during the third term of the previous year. She was extremely emotional when her parents dropped her off at school and would cling to the mother frantically until the teacher had to separate her from them. During the first few weeks in my classroom this year, she was timid and scared and needed constant motivation to try things on her own.



i) **Biographical description of the cases**

Table 4.3: Child C: Mindy – girl (indecisive in class)

	<u>Biographical information</u>
Home language	English
Chronological age when study commenced	Five years and eight months
At school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Observation revealed her lack of self-confidence. ▪ Could speak English fluently
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has a set routine at home - Parents makes use of a time-out system to discipline
Sibling/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One sister – three and a half years older
Parents' marital status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Married
Parents' occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mother = Stay at home mom ▪ Father = Operational manager

Mindy's parents were the first adult participants I interviewed and interesting and informative evidence came to light. An interesting thing that emerged from the interview was how the parents kept on referring to the couples' other daughter: Mindy's nine year old sister, Mia. Whenever a question was asked about Mindy, they would highlight the sister's achievements and divert attention from Mindy by speaking about the sister. It was clear that she was not afforded her rightful proportion of attention and appreciation. Another interesting aspect was that when a question was asked, the parents (especially the mother) would start talking about other insignificant things. They were careful of confrontation and interpreted my concern as a possible negative experience of their daughter. It was as if they were expecting to hear the worst. They tended to avoid speaking about Mindy, a tendency that alerted me that something was amiss.

The parents believe in a "time-out" system as a method of discipline with the occasional "hiding". During the interview the mother mentioned that the children would have to sit in a corner in their rooms whilst studying math charts.



ii) Interviews with the parents

During the interview, the mother was the more talkative parent and the father would just nod in agreement or ever so often add a little comment. At one point during the interview the mother spoke about her childhood and she was scared that history would repeat itself. The mother grew up with a maid who raised her because the parents were too busy and never involved in her life. The mother has an obvious fear that if she does not spend a lot of time with her children, they might end up being ignorant and uninformed like her.

Interview entry: **Mindy's mother**

Researcher: "What do you see as the most important responsibilities as a parent?"

Mindy's mother: "...to achieve whatever they want, you know... I never... My parents were never with me. I had a maid and then my mother... she went to look after a hotel and my father was always busy so I... I actually was lacking knowledge and I, I... when I was 11 I had a... not a mind... but I'd say I was... I didn't have somebody to help me with my work so I had a... they thought there was something wrong with me and they took me for tests. I actually had a... they just speed up all my abilities with reading. I was like 11 but had a mind of a 9 year old. They sped it up. So I'm actually lucky to be at home, just helping... you know... Mindy and Mia. To achieve their... to do as best as they can."

An aspect that immediately caught my attention was that Mindy used to be very confident at home and outside the home environment, but that her self-confidence, at some point, hit an all-time low, and it made me wonder whether that had an influence on her self-confidence and why she struggled to make her own choices in the classroom. The following three interview entries depict situations that could possibly have affected her self-confidence which in turn could lead to her indecisiveness:

Interview entry: **Mindy's mother**

Mindy's mother: "When she was younger she would like go to everybody and then Mia told her "that you mustn't go to strangers they'll steal you". Especially when we go grocery shopping she used to just run to anybody and Mia will say "No, they will kidnap you." And now she's... she's become very shy and now she normally hides, but I think she'll outgrow that."



Mindy's mother: "...you can see she wants the dog but we try to explain to her "why" we don't want to get one dog because for 7 hours she's at school and when they get home it's not just playing with the dog, it's homework... ..She even said no... she feels so bad because her father always says "you know, I always take my money and put it towards you children and everything you want. I should have actually got myself a bike." And she says: "Oh but mommy, for Valentine's day, take all my pocket money (she's got R50 in there) take it and go buy daddy a motorbike." And I said: "You can't buy him a real motorbike for R50! You would have to save like forever!"

Mindy's mother: "On Valentine's day it was our 10th anniversary and he wanted to take us all to Mauritius but then we said that we will only take them when they can swim properly so she's, I don't know why, she goes for swimming lessons, but now she's getting scared again. I don't know why, so I must just work on it..."

When asking Mindy's parents how they disciplined her, the mother's response was that she made use of the "time-out" system (as mentioned earlier on) and the children had to sit in their rooms and study math charts. It came as a shock to me because Mindy was only five years and eight months old when the study started and math was only introduced to her now since she had not been in a preschool for a long period before she came to this particular school. The mother also hinted that physical punishment was given at necessary times.

Interview entry: Mindy's mother

Researcher: "How do you discipline Mindy at home if she did something wrong?"

Mindy's mother: "I let them have time-out... um... I send them to their rooms and they have to sit and look at the wall and look at the... I give them charts and they um... it is math charts so they have to study the chart. So if you want to do something you look at those and you study them and learn them otherwise you are not allowed to play with any of the toys and you can't do that I'll take everything out of the room."

These interview entries depicting the conversation with the mother indicates that there was an obvious fear that her children might follow in her footsteps if she did not raise them in a different way from what she was raised, but through the way the children were currently raised, it could have a possible effect on their overall behaviour.



iii) Observational and field text data

Mindy was very withdrawn during activities in the classroom. She preferred to sit by herself and would ignore learners who wanted to interact with her. Mindy enjoyed staring into space and was caught up in a world of her own. During art activities, when the learners were given opportunities to make choices, Mindy was often very hesitant and indecisive:

Field text entry - Mindy

Mindy took a long time deciding what she wanted to take from the table. She got a magazine and paged through it and then returned it back to the table. A while later she did cut out a mouth from a magazine and although she wanted to stick it to her paper, she decided against it and instead went to fetch a toilet roll.

On a different occasion:

Field text entry - Mindy

Mindy picks up one item, looks at it, and then puts it down. Then she picks up another paper, puts it down again and then chooses a blue piece of paper and a scissor.

Noting that Mindy did not interact with other learners I decided to attempt group work where I had a decisive learner among the rest who could guide and support the indecisive learners in the particular group.

Diary entry - Mindy:

I did not think that Mindy would enjoy group work and honestly thought that she would be even more withdrawn and emotional. Even though she was quiet at first she later started talking to her friend and even laughing together, which also depicts a relaxed and confident attitude.

One of the first signs that Mindy was gaining self-confidence was when I read the learners a story about “How elephant got his long trunk” on a Friday morning. The instruction was that they could choose any scene from the story and draw it. Although she did ask me for reassurance if she could draw *any* part from the story,



she produced this beautiful drawing of two elephants standing by the waters' edge with a lurking crocodile below the water.

Diary entry - Mindy

I was kind of frustrated today, because my assistant did not come to work and the principal was very demanding so it was hectic with a class full of learners, just after the weekend, all wanting attention. But after today's work when I saw how Mindy did her work, it made me as a teacher, very proud and happy, because it is so exciting to see her gaining confidence as time passes.

This particular day I was frustrated due to certain issues, but I tried to stay positive. I came to realise how easy it was to focus on one's own frustrations and in turn, overlook the important factors happening right under your very eyes. Mindy was busy gaining more self-confidence and my behaviour, due to external factors, might have just broken that first link to her first-time decisiveness. As the study continued, along with a lot of motivation, Mindy quickly gained self-confidence. This self-confidence led to her making own choices with more ease as well as interacting with other learners. After that, Mindy's self-confidence continued increasing and she started making choices on her own:

Field text entry - Mindy

After the day's artwork, during free play time, Mindy and Alecia started drawing a picture together. Alecia is a more decisive learner than Mindy, but I notice that Mindy becomes decisive and talkative when she sits with a friend that is more decisive. Today she chose "group work" by herself and she was very talkative, gave her own opinions about things and didn't seem withdrawn.

During an art activity where Mindy and a decisive learner worked in pairs, I asked her whether she enjoyed working alongside a friend and the following spontaneous conversation portrays this:

Interview entry: Mindy

Researcher: "Do you like working together with a friend?"
Mindy: "Yes"



Researcher: “Why is that?”

Mindy: “Because then the friend can help me and give ideas, because if I like, can’t draw a bee and she does, then she can help me to make one.”

Mindy quickly started to make own choices and it was evident that her self-confidence was growing day by day. She started to display a growing decisiveness in an attempt to assert herself. After about two months, Mindy was very talkative and could answer my spontaneous questions with ease and without hesitation. Activities where she had to interact with learners in a group, whether it were small groups or pairs, proved to be very good for her, because the decisive learner would guide her and Mindy would often look up to that learner. A newly-found relationship of trust could be detected among the group members.

iv) The participant’s behaviour in the classroom in general

As mentioned earlier, Mindy was a scared and emotional learner at the beginning of the year. She was indecisive when it came to other activities inside the classroom especially during free play time where the learners could choose what they wanted to play with:

Diary entry - Mindy:

I tried to motivate Mindy to sit with some of the other learners during lunch time, but she still sits by herself. I don’t want to force her to do something if she doesn’t want to because I am scared that I will make her even more withdrawn and scared.

As soon as she got familiar with the new classroom and teacher, she quickly gained self-confidence and started interacting with other learners during activities such as Numeracy, Life skills and Free-play:



Mindy and some friends
playing with the dolls



Once Mindy became more confident she started to interact more with the other learners. She enjoyed herself more.

Mindy with her friends
during lunch-time



During tea- and lunch times she would be very talkative and would even make jokes.

Figure 4.9: Mindy enjoying herself at school

It was wonderful to see how Mindy became more decisive once she gained more self-confidence.

v) The participant's behaviour during visual arts activities

Mindy preferred to work by herself during art activities and often sat by herself. I did notice that she would look at the other learners with interest as if there were a kind of longing to be there with them:

Diary entry - Mindy

Today I see Mindy sitting by herself again. I did ask her if she wants to sit with other learners but she just shrugged and said that she was ok. A group of girls sat close to her and I could see how Mindy glanced at them. At one point one of the girls made a joke and even Mindy smiled along.

Early on in the research Mindy started to interact more with the other learners. Later on she spoke with confidence about her own work as well as with noticeable excitement in her voice:



Field text entry - Mindy

When she saw me looking at their picture she immediately started describing her picture to me, telling me exactly what she did and *why* she did it that way.

One such activity, where Mindy often asked me if what she was doing looked “alright”, was during Jik-painting. This entails dipping an ear bud into Jik and “drawing” onto a paper that was painted with food colour. The “drawing” then turns white. A few months later, during an art activity where the learners constructed their own autumn trees, Mindy never once asked whether she could use the sticks and/or the bark. She was noticeably more confident and displayed a willingness to participate. She took sticks right away, started placing them on her paper and then pasted them. Where she was once indecisive, she started making more independent choices and as a result, she created beautiful work, displaying a sense of pride. Compare the following:

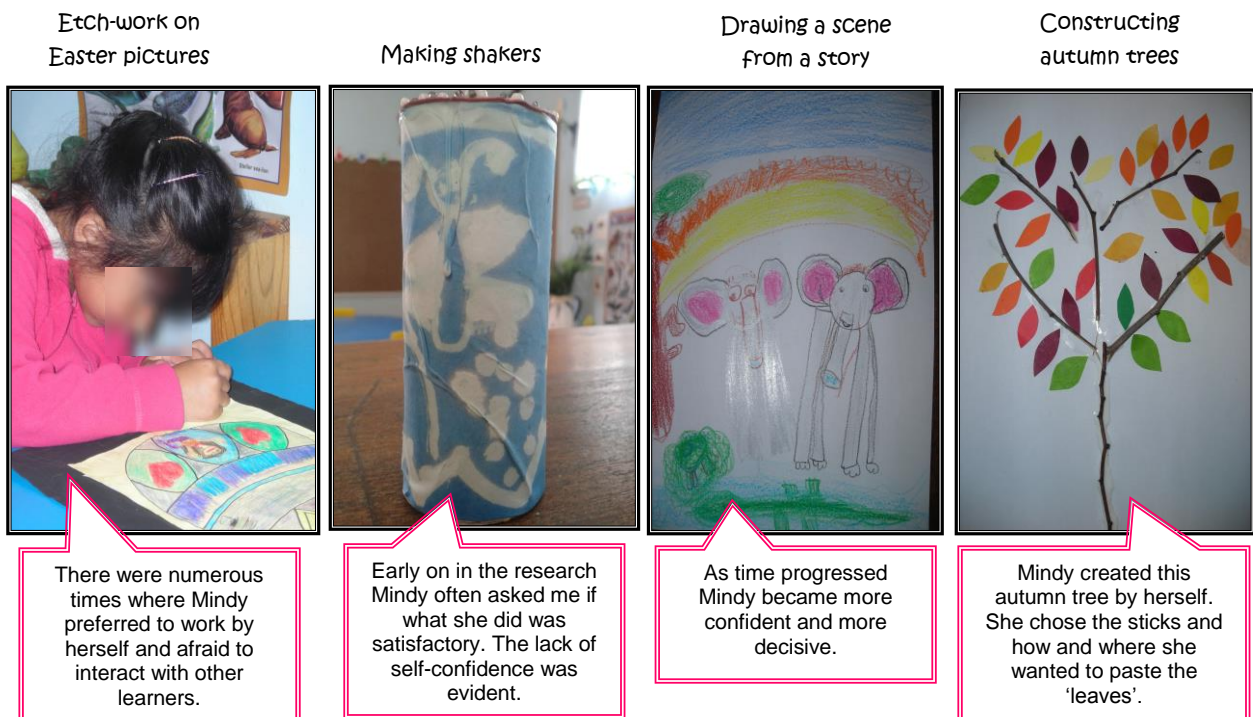


Figure 4.10: Mindy was an indecisive learner but quickly gained self-confidence as time progressed

After group work, I could see how social-development took place. A lot of thought went into the artwork and it was not only the work of one learner. They spoke to one



another, shared ideas and listened to each other's remarks. One of the key points of creating the artwork together was communication. When the decisive learner spoke to Mindy, Mindy was in a way "required" to talk back. This allowed her to realise that she also had a "voice" and that she really was allowed to make choices too:

Mindy and a decisive learner
working together on their farm
picture



Mindy and a decisive learner worked together on a drawing. She did not seem dominated or overwhelmed and the end results were amazing.

The end product of an
indecisive and decisive learning
working together



Upon asking Mindy why she enjoys working with a friend, her response was that if she struggles and her friend could help her.

Figure 4.11: Social-interaction between Mindy and a decisive learner

I did not expect Mindy to become decisive so quickly but it showed me once more that all learners are different and that one should definitely see them as individuals and not expect them to develop at the same rate.

4.3.4 Participant D: Verne

Verne started preschool for the very first time this year. He had never been in a preschool before and he was very overwhelmed by the new surroundings, all the new learners and a new teacher, who were all unfamiliar to him. He appeared a bit lost and unsettled and he would have to adapt gradually as I realized change does not happen overnight.



i) **Biographical description of the cases**

Table 4.4: Child D: Verne – boy (indecisive in class)

	<u>Biographical information</u>
Home language	English
Chronological age when study commenced	Five years and five months
At school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Through observation he seemed to have very little self-confidence. ▪ He could speak English fluently
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He has a set routine at home - The nanny takes care of him at home - Parents work late - Parents makes use of a time-out system to discipline
Siblings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two siblings = older brother and younger sister Brother 18 months older; Sister 3 years younger
Parents' marital status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Married
Parents' occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother = Para Legal • Father = Consultant

Both the parents were very interested in the study but they were also the only parents who had some questions like: “How will this work?” or “Can we see your research afterwards?” After explaining to them the research study and how it would work, I offered to e-mail them a copy of my proposal as well as assure them that they could see the research at any time, did they wish to see it.

The parents have three young children of which Verne is the middle child. The oldest child is a bright, confident and decisive boy whereas the youngest child always demands her parents' attention. The parents have very demanding work schedules and both often arrive home at seven in the evenings. Therefore the children have a nanny that looks after them once they return home from school in the afternoons, which is around two o'clock. The nanny takes them to the older sibling's extra mural activities, prepares their lunch and often their dinner and when the parents get home, they would help the oldest with his homework and then put the children to bed.



Discipline is important to these parents and they make use of the “time-out” system. The children have to sit inside their bedrooms and think or acknowledge what they did was wrong. For the parents it is important to understand where the children came from when they (the children) did something wrong.

ii) Interviews with the parents

The interview with the parents unveiled very interesting aspects that concerned Verne. The parents seemed to care very deeply about their children, but I could not help pick up on one specific aspect and that was that Verne, being the middle child often got swamped by his two siblings:

Interview entry: Verne’s mother

Researcher: “Do you see that Verne is sometimes, you know, dominated, by the brother and sister in the sense of if he struggles with something would Tony or Katie jump in and help him before Verne himself could?”

Verne’s mother: “Yes, very much. Yes... Verne seems to be more... not withdrawn, but he is my easy child, like... Tony and Katie is constantly taking mommy’s limelight and he’s okay with that. Well... or so it seems. He’s subdued. If I ask Verne or... I like to stimulate them a lot, like giving them little exercises um... and Tony will always... because Tony is very bright, so Tony would answer before Verne could. So Verne is sort of just like... if I ask him something, he looks at Tony. He is waiting for Tony to jump in so he doesn’t really have that initiative... Tony takes that from him and Katie is like always in my face so...”

Upon asking the mother if Verne really is satisfied about not being in the “limelight” as much as the other two siblings, the mother was a bit hesitant to answer, but in the end she did say that it did seem so:

Interview entry: Verne’s mother

Researcher: “... but you say that Verne is okay with that?”

Verne’s mother: “Um... yeah, I think so... That one... (Katie) she gives me beans hey. She is such a bully. She bullies her brothers, she takes whatever they have ag... I don’t know if it’s because she’s the youngest but sjoe, ja [*sic*].”



Earlier I mentioned the role the nanny plays in the children's routine at home. It seemed she played quite a big role in the children's lives because the parents' working hours took up a lot of their time. Although the parents are loving and devoted parents, little time is spent with Verne himself:

Interview entry: Verne's father

Researcher: "Do you have a routine after school when the children get home? You know... is there a set routine that you guys follow?"

Verne's father: "Well, we're still at work when they get home from school. I work until seven at night so it's a bit difficult. Um... so basically in the afternoons yes, um... Anna (nanny) would basically give them lunch and then play time they could watch a little Cartoon Network and now Tony's very busy with sports and stuff so they would all go with and watch Tony, whatever sport it is. When we get home it is basically just doing Tony's homework, "How was your day?" then we do a Bible story and then it is to bed."

These interviews cast light on Verne's feelings of neglect and the fact that the other siblings demand a lot of attention. It became apparent that Verne is often a little too dominated by his siblings and that he often gets overlooked because of the attention the other two demands. Due to the parents working schedules, very little time is also spent with him.

iii) Observational and field text data

The great thing about observations is that you can observe the participants without them knowing that you are doing so. When Verne first came into my classroom, he was very shy and introverted and did not speak to anybody. One could see that it was his first time in a preschool and that he was overwhelmed by it all.

During one of the earlier themes, "My body and I", the learners were allowed to create themselves as a side-activity. There were a number of art materials that the learners could choose from and although some learners that seemed decisive had no problem with the variety of art materials to choose from, certain learners seemed very overwhelmed.



Diary entry:

Many learners seemed overwhelmed by the large variety of materials that they could select from, although there were other learners who did not find it hard. They in turn, went to the table a lot of times to get more items. It made me wonder if I shouldn't put out less items next time as to not overwhelm them and then observe their reactions.

Verne was one of the indecisive participants that found this too overwhelming. I thought about this diary entry and it made me wonder if I as the teacher, made the mistake to expose the learners to a wide variety of materials. The art activities that followed upon this particular one, was taken into consideration and although I reduced the art materials I still made sure that they were adequate enough to allow the learners to make choices.

One of the first things I noticed about Verne was that he displayed fear of showing me his artwork and also to try things by himself when he had the opportunity to do make his own choices. The following three field text entries, which happened on separate occasions, depict what I observed:

Field text entry – Verne

As I approached Verne, he tried to cover his work as if he did not want me to see it, as if he was scared and shy.

Field text entry – Verne

He asked me how to draw a door. He said: "I can't draw a door. I don't know how."

Field text entry – Verne

He seemed nervous after I explained what the artwork entailed. He was unsure and asked me what he must do. After constant motivation he later asked me if what he created already looked "okay".

Verne was not only scared to try making artwork by himself but it also looked as if he was scared of what my reaction as a teacher would be to his work. In the beginning of the study Verne would often try and cover his work so that I could not see what he was making. There were even times when he started crying when I asked him if I



could have a peek. Instead of forcing him, I constantly reminded him that the artwork was *his* work and that everyone's art looks different. An example of this was that during the theme of autumn we looked at different trees, their trunks and leaves outside and discussed them. While explaining to the learners about the artwork at hand, I would ask them if *all trees look exactly the same*. Therefore I also motivated the learners that no one's autumn trees have to or will look exactly the same because there are such a majority of different trees. Instead of forcing Verne, I let him come to me on *his* time when *he* felt confident to do so.

iv) The participant's behaviour in the classroom in general

Verne often needed encouragement to do things in the classroom. A remarkable act that caught my attention was his yearning to hug me but he somehow could not get himself to do so. Only once I encouraged him, and he ventured closer to hug me. This went on for a few months. During discussions Verne would keep quiet and needed a lot of motivation to participate in the discussions. During free play time it was also obvious that he was keeping to himself. Towards the end of March, Verne started interacting with some of the other learners:

Field text entry – Verne

Outside art activities, Verne has a little more confidence, for example during lunch time and play time. When I asked him who his friends were, he was quick to respond: "Um... Jaydon, Khushal... Oh and Sechaba."

Verne playing with the shapes by himself



At the beginning Verne preferred playing or doing activities by himself.

Verne and a friend Creating "swords" with the tools



Later on Verne started to intermingle with the other learners.

Figure 4.12: Verne doing activities by himself and later started interacting with other learners



Verne slowly started to interact with the other learners as soon as he got familiar with his surroundings and got over his fear of being at a preschool for the first time.

v) The participant’s behaviour during visual arts activities

Verne was initially extremely indecisive when this study started. When I described an art project or art activity to the learners, especially with opportunities where they could make their own choices, he would seem fearful and tense. There were times, where as soon as the learners started on their artwork, he would become emotional and say that he could not do it. In due course, Verne started making own choices, whether it was just etching his own pattern on his picture’s frame or by painting his background in the colour he wanted it:

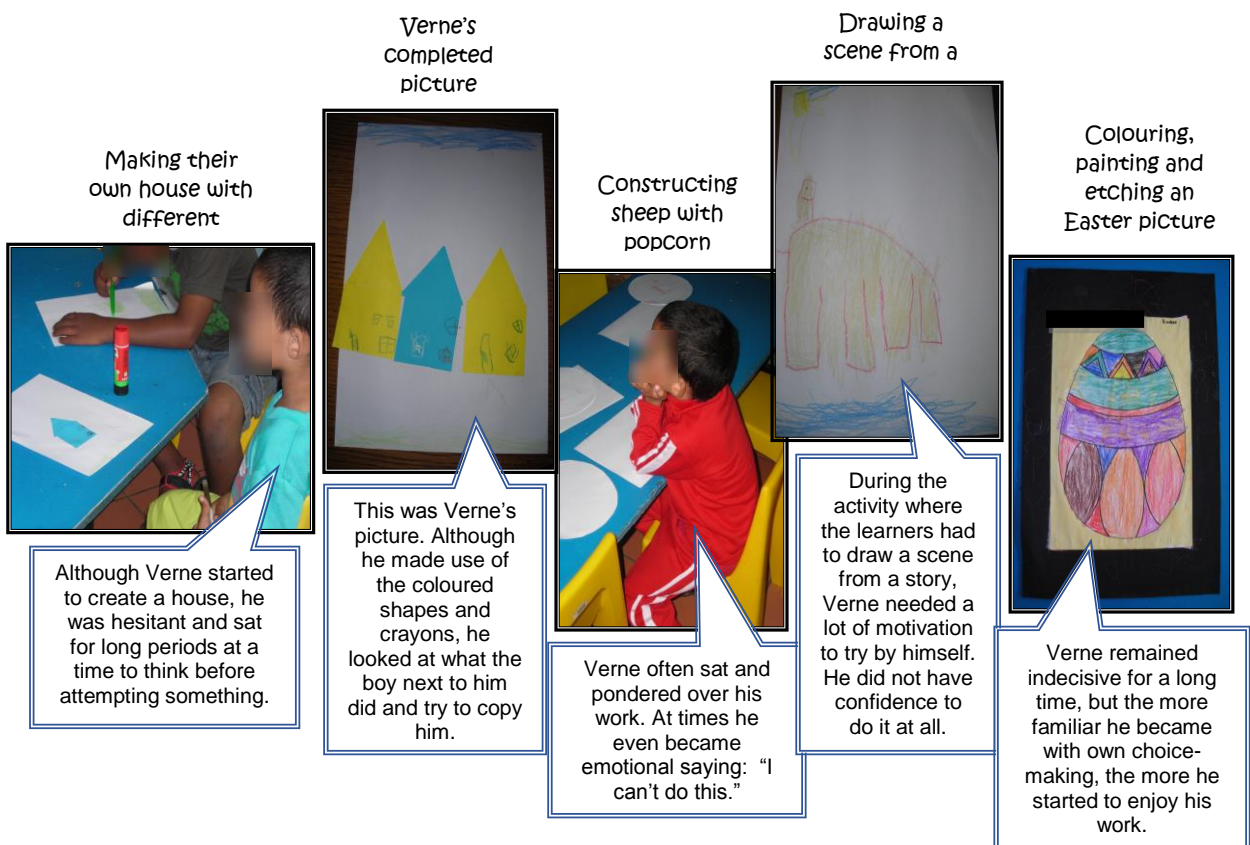


Figure 4.13 Verne took longer to show signs of decisiveness

At some point of the research I tried group work where I would place a decisive learner along with an indecisive learner. During one such activity, the learners chose partners for the process of creating pumpkins through paper mache and once the



pumpkins were “dry” they had to paint them together as well as construct a pumpkin patch together. One of the most exciting parts of this activity was to see how interactive Verne was in the whole process. He was communicating with his friend as well as laughing and making jokes about the funny shapes of the “pumpkins”.

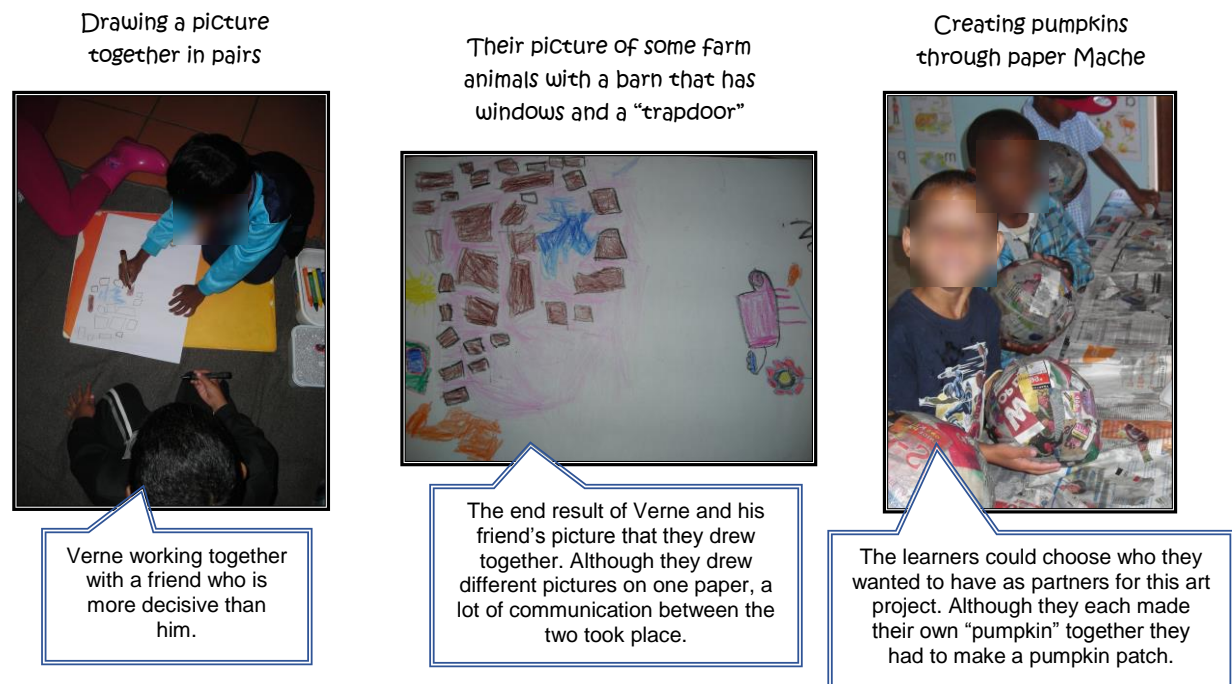


Figure 4.14: Social-interaction in small groups or pairs

During another group activity the learners had to draw a picture of a farm together. My goal was to get the indecisive learner to communicate with the decisive learner and that the decisive learner could assist the other in making choices even if it was making choices together. Collaborative work seemed to pay off. At one point I observed the two learners and heard the following conversation:

Field text entry – Verne

The longer the activity goes on, the more talkative Verne becomes with Khushal:

Verne: “Let’s put this back now.”

Khushal: “No, we’re not done yet, we still need to colour here.” (And he pointed to a spot on the paper.

Verne: “Okay, let’s draw a window here.”



Together Verne and his friend drew a farm-picture that had a pig as well as a barn. Along with the decisive learner, Verne decided that the barn should have windows as well as a trapdoor so that the animals could “escape” if there were to be any trouble. I never imagined Verne to get to a point where he would be able to use his imagination so confidently.

4.3.5 Participant E: **Khego**

Khego came into my class at the beginning of the year and did not seem like an emotional or scared learner. It was only upon observation that I noticed that he lacked a lot of self-confidence and could not make choices for himself, which led me to suspect that he was an indecisive learner.

i) Biographical description of the cases

Table 4.5: Child E: **Khego – boy (indecisive in class)**

	Biographical information
Home language	Sepedi
Chronological age when study commenced	Five years and nine months
At school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through observation he seemed to have very little self-confidence. • Could not speak English fluently
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No routine at home • Parents are often busy with other projects outside work • Makes use of physical punishment to discipline
Siblings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Younger brother - one year younger
Parents' marital status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Married
Parents' occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother = Economist • Father = Tourism researcher

Khego has two parents who both have good occupations and he also has a brother who is a year younger than himself. Their home language is Sepedi and before Khego came to this particular preschool, he was in a preschool where the learners just spoke Sepedi. He spoke very limited English at the beginning of the school year.



Both the parents were excited about the research study and immediately gave me verbal and then written consent so that Khego could be a participant for the study. The parents would love for Khego to be more decisive in the classroom because they believe that it would contribute to Khego's self-confidence in general.

Both the parents are very involved with their work and also have external projects where they are involved and therefore they do not have a routine for the two boys at home. The children come to school between 07:00 and 09:00 and then they are fetched, either by the mother or the father at around 17:30, so little time is also spent with the children. The only rules that they have at home is to pack away their toys once they finished playing with it. The mother admitted that she is not good at disciplining the children. Talking does not work for them so the mother and father both make use of physical punishment.

ii) Interviews with the parents

The interview with the parents allowed me to get to know Khego in another environment. The father earlier on in the interview mentioned that Khego's brother is a gentle and shy boy and that neither of the boys dominate one another. This one particular interview question made me realise that the parents treat the two boys the same instead of as two individuals. Khego's father was truthful to admit that they sometimes treat the two children the same, thinking that they *are* the same:

Interview entry: Khego's father

Researcher: "Do you think Khego is sometimes, I will say, dominated by Pheny? (Younger brother) You know, say for instance Khego wants to do something, would Pheny jump in and say "No, I'll do it for you or I'll answer the question for you" or can Khego you know... be his own person?"

Khego's father: "I think he can be his own person. Maybe sometimes it's us who sort of um... you know, sometimes I feel like they are the same so I think sometimes we treat them the same..."

The parents spend very little time with the children, because they are involved with other projects outside their own occupations and therefore there is no set routine for Khego at home:



Interview entry: Khego's father

Researcher: "Do you guys have a routine, like when you get home from work and school, do you have a set routine like going home, making lunch, having family time...?"

Khego's father: "Unfortunately no... For the past... almost a year we don't really have a routine because we've been busy with some other projects, so from here we go to the project site and then... then we go home. So at home we don't really have a routine."

Khego gets stimulated mainly through television at home. He does not engage in active activities:

Interview entry: Khego's mother

Researcher: "What activities at home does Khego like doing at home?"

Khego's mother: "He likes TV... he likes cartoons. He likes um... these programmes where they... there's this Chinese one where they do activities... there's that new one, Wipe Out. So he likes... because I also like those so he knows like "Mommy, when are we going to watch it?" He follows it. He likes cartoons..."

During these interview entries I picked that very little time spent with Khego at home and that due to the lack of parent-involvement, he turns to the television to enjoy company.

iii) Observational and field text data

Although observations for this study were meant for Khego, who is an indecisive learner in the classroom, I could not help to notice to my amazement that Khego and his brother dressed exactly the same every day. There is a one year age difference between the two of them and they do not even look the same, and yet, they dress identically every day.

Field text entry – Khego

I never picked up on it from the start, but I kept an eye on it the last couple of weeks, but I saw that Khego and his brother always dressed exactly the same



for school. From the socks, to the pants, to the t-shirts and even when they wear jackets, it was the same.

Observations helped me to pay attention to finer details with regard to the learners in the classroom. I definitely noticed Khego's indecisiveness in the classroom, but I also observed that he struggled with certain skills, which might have led to his indecisiveness:

Diary entry - Khego

I came to realise that when I allowed learners to create their artwork, exercising their own choices, problem areas could be identified and areas and skills that needed attention could receive attention. For example with Khego I could see that he was still struggling with his fine motor skills. He struggled to pick up the small twigs, hold them and then spread glue on them. I could also see that he battled with spatial orientation and did not make use of his whole paper space.

During art activities Khego too, would hide his artwork instead of showing it to me. This happened numerous times at the start of the year. He needed a lot of motivation that his work was his own and that it did not need to be hidden:

Field text entry – Khego

When he finished his work, he hid it away and I had to ask him where it is. He hid it under his bag inside his locker.

Khego was very scared to do his own artwork. He would often just sat and looked at the other learners. Most of the times, he would even try to copy the other learners. This not only showed indecisive behaviour, but also a lack of self-confidence to try by himself as he needed constant guidance from me:

Field text entry – Khego

Khego did not complete his project. I noticed that he did not seem upset by the fact that he struggled by himself not knowing what to do. He came to me numerous times to ask if he was allowed to do something specific and although I kept on explaining to him what he could do, he still did not complete



his project. In between he also seemed very distracted, often looking at what the other learners did. He at one point tried to copy them.

Field text entry – Khego

I noticed that Khego did not draw something from the story. He kept on looking at what the learners next to him did and I had to motivate him many times to just try by himself.

...After about 10 minutes I saw that Khego drew a house which did not feature in the story. When asking him why he decided to draw a house he told me that his house was the house of the “3 Little Pigs”.

Field text entry – Khego

I noticed that Khego still looked at the other learners and what they did. He needed constant motivation to try by himself.

Only in April Khego started showing signs of decisiveness and tried his artwork by himself more often. It took much longer for Khego to have more self-confidence in the classroom. This made me realise once more that all learners were different and that we as teachers should not expect all learners at a specific age to reach a specific goal at the same time. It is important to treat all learners as individuals and to grant them their space to develop on *their* own time. At the start of this study, my motivation seemed to go unnoticed by Khego, but in time it paid off.

Field text entry – Khego

After some motivation Khego said: “I’m finished with my sticks.” Out of his own he started on his tree’s leaves without asking me whether he must start on them or how he must do it.

Khego was the indecisive learner that took the longest to show some decisive behaviour, but in the end he started making his own choices without fear or hesitation.

iv) The participant’s behaviour in the classroom in general

Since the beginning of the year, Khego was a lonely boy. He would play by himself, work by himself and would even have lunch by himself. He needed a lot of



motivation to join the other learners. I observed that the other learners would try to engage in conversation with him but he would just ignore them:

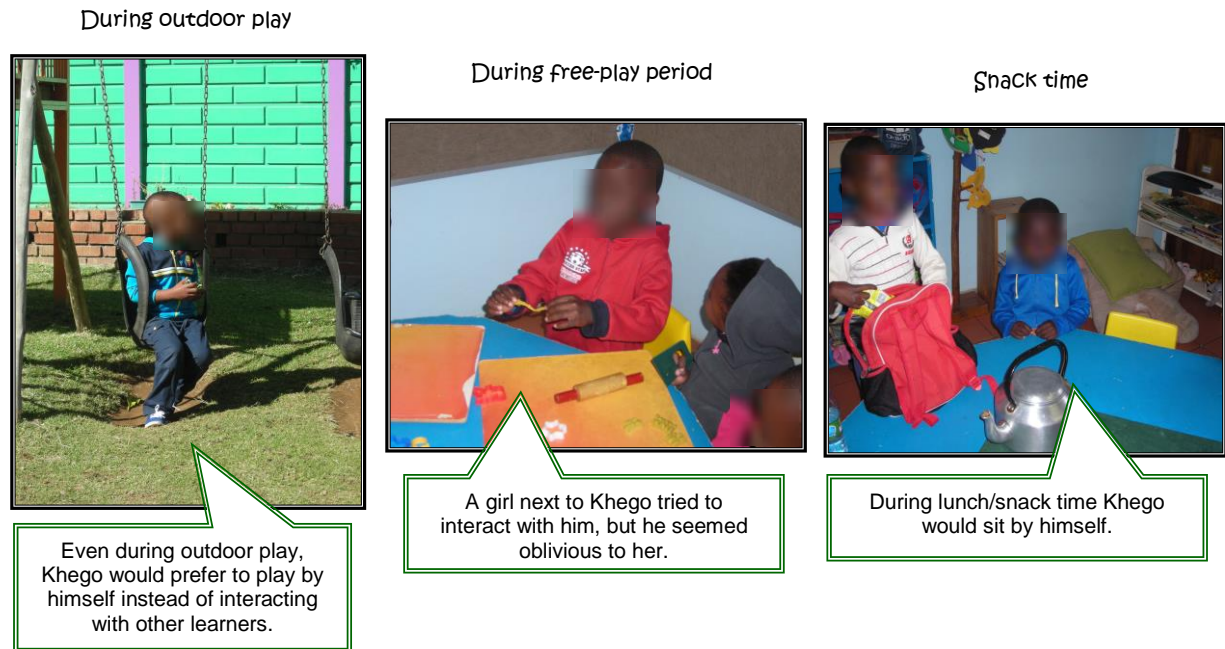


Figure 4.15: Khego showing no sign whatsoever to interact with other learners

Only from around the month of April did Khego started to pay attention to what other learners would say to them and although he remained by himself most of the time, he would then observe the other more closely and sit closer to them.

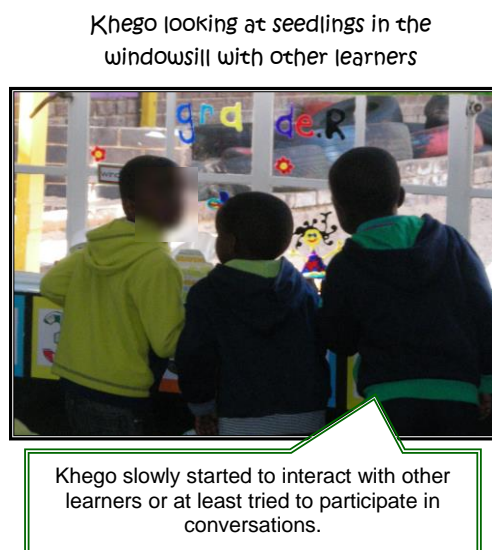


Figure 4.16: Khego next to two learners who looked at seedlings in the window sill



Patience was what it took until Khego started showing involvement with the other learners. Although I kept on motivating him, he started interacting with other learners on his own time.

v) The participant's behaviour during visual arts activities

Khego was the most withdrawn and unsure participant of all. He lacked composure and appeared very uncertain and nervous. He displayed hesitancy to break through the mould of uncertainty and preferred to be a passive onlooker instead of an active participant during art activities. His lack of initiative was also evident as he would rather copy what others created than to pluck up the courage to come up with his own original work. His command of the English language also posed to be a problem as he battled to be articulate and fluent. His main problem was a deep-seated fear of the second language viz. English. It hampered his initiative and it surfaced as a probable reason for his indecisiveness. His hesitancy, uncertainty and the fact that he constantly viewed the work of his peers before attempting anything, also showed that he did not understand the instructions given to him in the classroom properly. Closer to the end of the study Khego would still look at the other learners, but he had more self-confidence to try artwork by himself and thus enjoyed it.

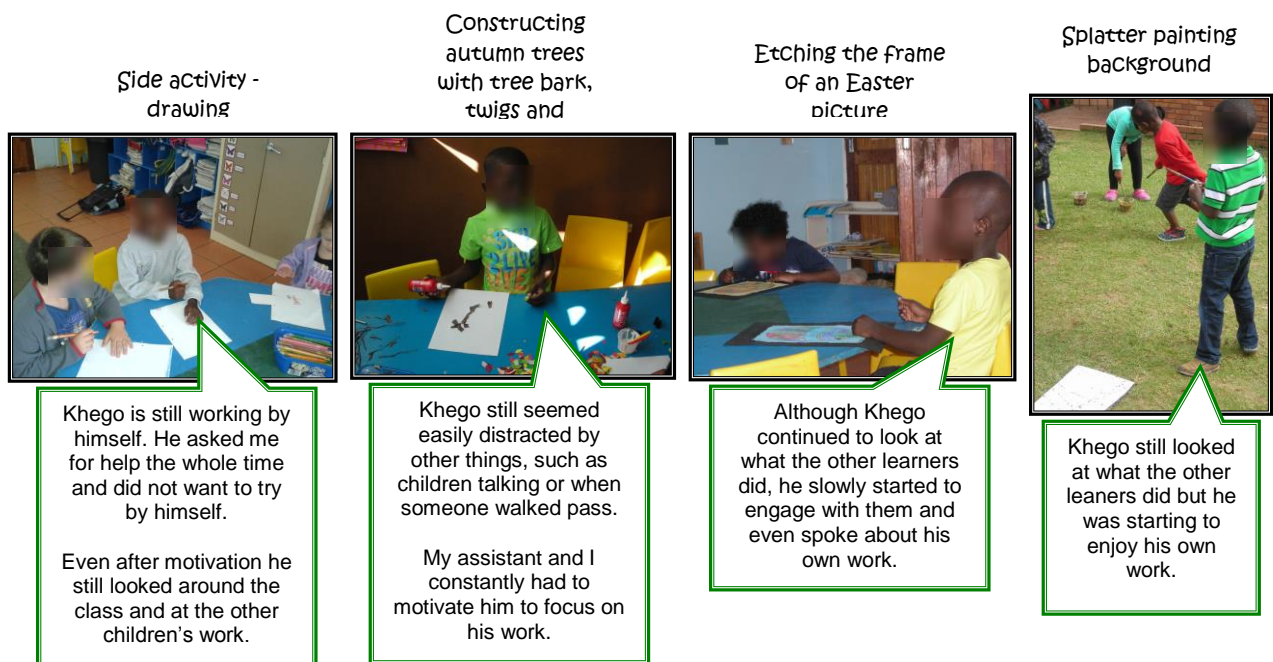


Figure 4.17: Khego was very indecisive almost right through to the end of the study



At the start of this study, Khego showed similar behaviour to Verne, when hiding his artwork in an effort to conceal it from me. This type of reaction occurred in many instances and a sustained effort had to be made to convince him to participate actively in exercises and drawings of any kind. His reaction to any encouragement was very negative and demotivating. At first when I praised him about his artwork he seemed apathetic, but I persevered in my efforts to involve and to urge him to participate. As a teacher, I want the best for all my learners and not being able to get through to a learner who needs your guidance and support, can make you feel like a failure. It is frustrating but it is very rewarding when that learner does show signs of progress and self-confidence.

When I tried group work the first time, it did not seem as if I was successful in my initial attempts to assist him, but on closer observation the signs of a growing involvement became apparent especially during group work where his friends prodded and involved him. By listening and looking at the decisive learner, he did something he never did before. Group work activities later proved to support Khego with his indecision:

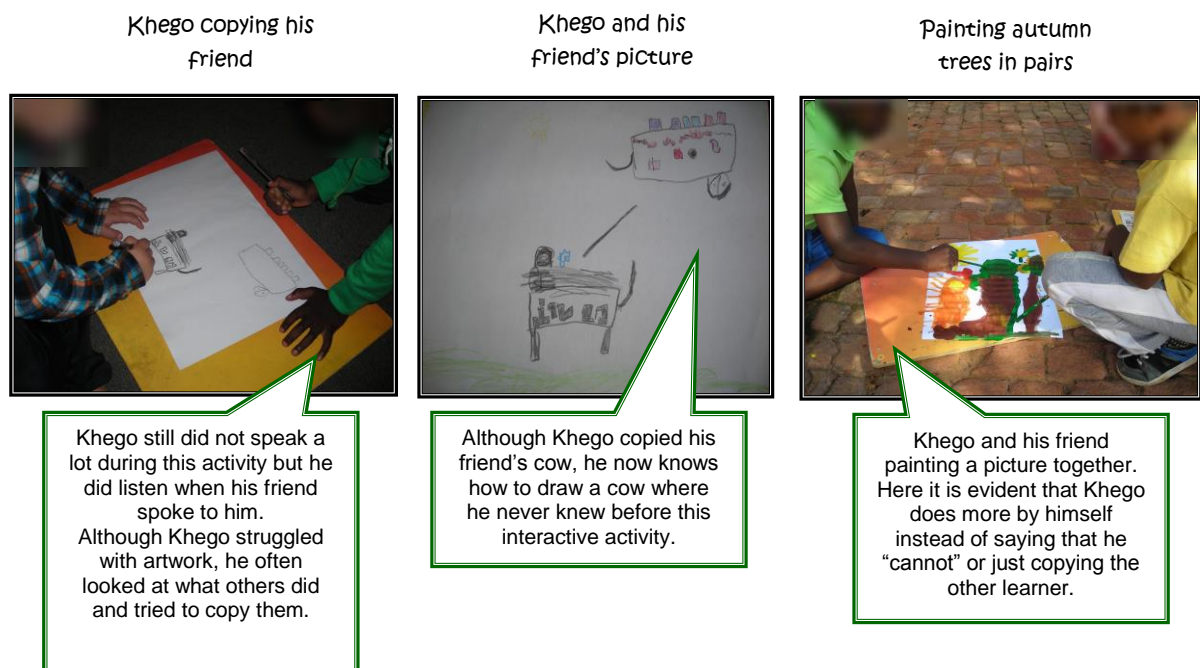


Figure 4.18: Interaction between Khego and a decisive learner



Although Khego took a very long time to show some decisive behaviour, even though it was just a little bit, it surfaced with constant motivation and the support of a more capable learner.

4.4 THEMES AND CATEGORIES FROM THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The themes with their categories, which arose from the research findings, are depicted in the following table:

Table 4.6: Data themes and categories

Themes	Categories
<p>Home environment</p> <p>“That’s what we are looking at as parents. You look for the positive things to happen in life to your kids...”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cultural background ▪ The family context ▪ Child-rearing styles
<p>Disposition</p> <p>“I don’t think that I can do this...”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fear ▪ Learner’s self-confidence ▪ Motivation
<p>Behaviour</p> <p>“I like working with a friend, because then she can help me and give ideas, because if I like, can’t draw a bee and she does, then she can help me to make one.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indecision ▪ Choice-making ▪ Interaction

Through various data collection methods (see 3.3.3), I was able to gather enough data. Inductive data analysis allowed the identification of three very distinctive themes as well as their categories.

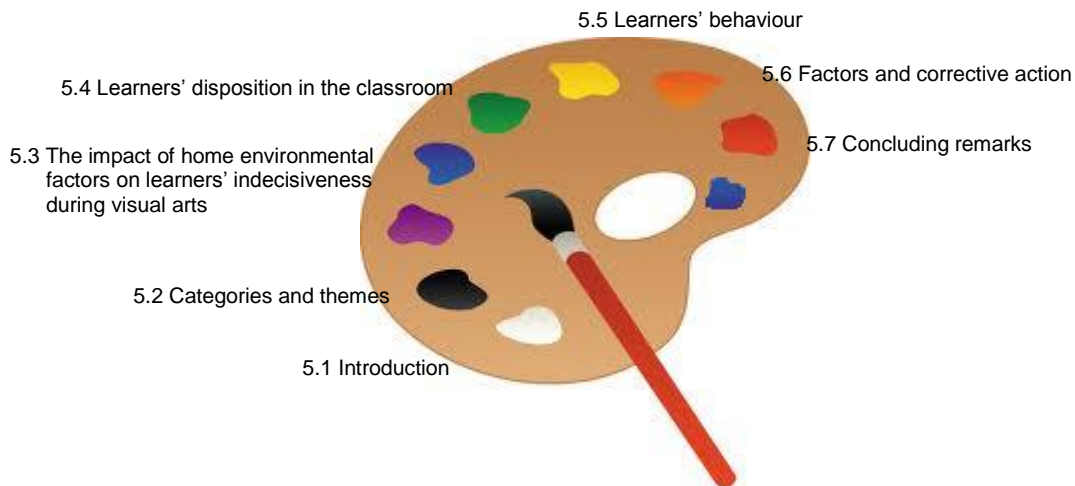
4.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Chapter 4 presented the research findings according to the multiple case studies including the decisive learner and four indecisive learners. A few, very distinct, themes and their categories arose from the data findings which are interpreted in chapter 5.



CHAPTER 5

Interpretation of research findings



5.1 INTRODUCTION

The responses of the five participants were presented as part of the multiple case study in chapter 4. Each participant's biographical data, the data from interviews with the parents, the observational and field data, data of the participants' behaviour in the classroom in general as well as the participants' behaviour during visual arts activities were discussed and analysed. Themes and subsequent categories emerged from the data analysis which will be interpreted and discussed in this chapter.

According to Creswell (2008: 264–265) interpretation of the research findings implies that the findings are linked with those of the literature and are differed from or agreed with. It allows the researcher to create new meaning from the findings that could contribute further to new educational insights (Maree, 2007: 112). Creswell (2008: 265) maintains that personal reflections constitute a large part of the interpretation because of the personal involvement within the field of the study. Therefore my personal reflections will cast insight and meaning for the interpretation of the data. The data were therefore interpreted in view of my personal observation, the research findings and the connection with other literature (see section 2.3) as well as with the theory of Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) (see section 2.2).



5.2 CATEGORIES AND THEMES

Three very distinct themes and their categories featured prominently after data analysis (see section 4.4). Figure 5.1 gives a visual representation of how these themes are integrated with one another and what impact they have on learners in a classroom during visual art activities. The categories could further be divided into internal and external forces which impacted the behaviour of learners in the classroom.

The external factors relating to the home environment were: cultural background, the family context and the child-rearing styles through which the parents raise their children. The internal factors were: the learners' fear, their self-confidence in the classroom and how motivation supported their disposition. These factors influenced the learners' behaviour which was: indecision, how making own choices were affected and how interaction with other learners contributed to their behaviour.

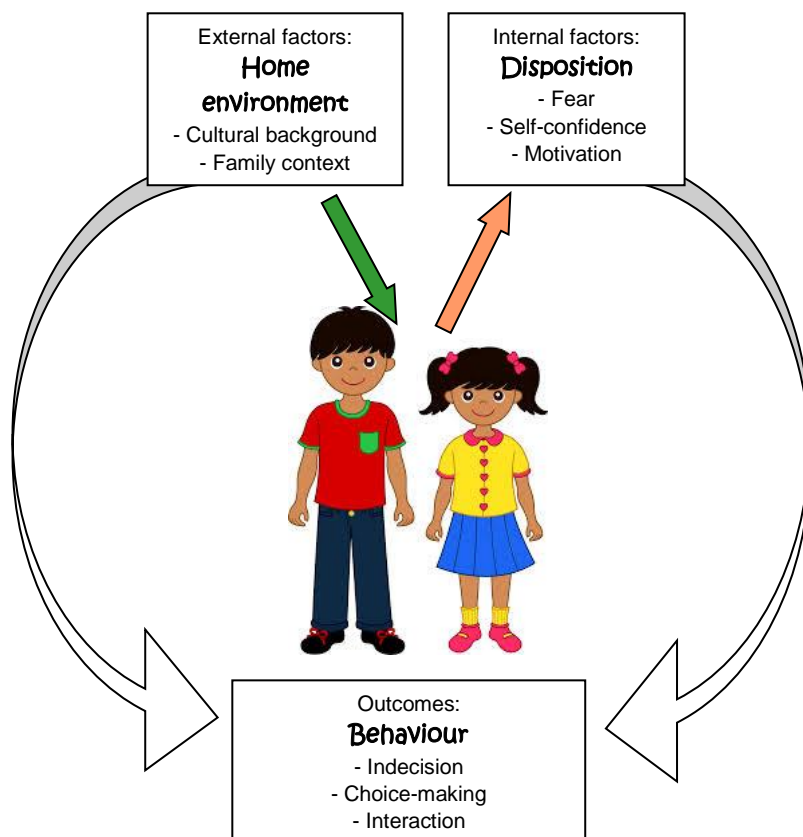


Figure 5.1: A model of the impact of internal and external factors on learners' behaviour during visual arts activities



Although the three themes are discussed separately it will be noticeable that some of the categories will overlap with each other throughout the other themes as well.

5.3 THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC FACTORS ON LEARNERS' INDECISIVENESS DURING VISUAL ARTS

Interviews with the parents gave me considerable insight into their home environment. The main categories that could be distinguished were: the cultural background, the family context and the child-rearing styles. The home environment of young learners appeared to be a definite positive or negative effect on them (Turner *et al.* 2012: 216).

5.3.1 The influence of cultural background on the home environment

Every family has some sort of cultural influence, whether it is knowledge, skills, beliefs or socialisation within the community that is passed on from generation to generation. According to Vygotsky, the influence from the environment exerts a direct influence on how a person's brain is developed and stimulated (see section 2.2.1 and 2.3.1). During the interviews with the parents, most of the parents revealed how *their* own cultural background influenced the way they raised their children.

One salient aspect of cultural background that surfaced was the role of traditional cultural influences. One parent referred to her traditional cultural background where it is the custom to choose a career for the child even if it causes unhappiness. Because of cultural traditions, the parents made decisions about their children's futures, for example choosing a specific occupation for them (see section 2.3.1). Even though it causes unhappiness for the particular person who has to follow the premeditated decisions, it becomes a cycle which continues throughout generations. It was during the interviews that one particular mother revealed that she wanted to break that cycle. She believed that if children are not allowed to make their own choices, it hinders their self-esteem and influences their chances to a happy future. A low self-esteem is a direct consequence of such control which in turn manifests itself as part of learner behaviour in the classroom (see section 2.3.6).



This aspect of cultural background was interpreted on the basis of interviews with the parents. There was, however, one aspect that I observed in the classroom during the research process itself as well as from the interviews with the parents that warrants attention. Some learners are raised in a specific mother tongue at home, but are then brought to a school where a different language is used as medium of instruction. When the learner cannot speak the language which the teacher uses as medium of instruction, it can give rise to feelings of insecurity and fear, a low self-esteem as well as indecisiveness in the young learner (see section 2.3.6).

5.3.2 The family context

Maynard and Martini (2005: 4) contend that the family context in which young learners grow up, has an immediate influence on their development. When the environment provides safety and security for young learners, they would be free and confident to express themselves. However if the environment does not provide such support, it deprives them of knowledge and new experiences (see section 2.2.2). This study consisted of a multiple case study, where indecisive learners were compared to a decisive learner in a school environment where own choices impact indecisiveness.

An interview with the decisive learner's mother made it evident that a warm and loving family context was established, even in the absence of a father figure. The sibling of the decisive learner, although ten years her senior, contributed to this affectionate context because the mother's involvement in both their lives allowed for a lot of communication between all of them and stability which led to a solid foundation for positive behaviour in the classroom (see section 2.3.1). This was the only single-parent family and it did not have a negative effect on the learner, because the mother still made sure that she provided a safe and secure environment for her children (see section 2.2.2).

A few factors from the indecisive learners' family could be detected as influential forces that contributed to learner indecisiveness in the classroom. Firstly, most of the parents had very hectic schedules at work, that required a lot of their time and less



time spent with their children at home. Nannies are substitutions to help out with the children until the parents arrive home in the evenings. Some parents even leave their children at school from 08:00–17:30 whereupon extra business appointments still needed to be attended. Due to little time spent with their children, the home environment becomes unstable, which in turn can lead to negative behaviour (see section 2.3.1). As mentioned earlier, Vygotsky maintains that the environment in which young learners find themselves, influences the development and stimulation of their brains, so if young learners see very little of their parents in their home environment, their brains will be stimulated differently to those learners whose parents spend more time with them (see section 2.2.1).

Secondly, sibling rivalry played a role in the family context. According to Buist *et al.* (2013: 98) the relationship of siblings has an impact on the rest of the family. The age gap between the four indecisive learners and their siblings was not very wide and a lot of competition existed between them. Some of these siblings tended to dominate and therefore impact negatively on the emergent learners' self-esteem and thus caused fear within these indecisive learners. Any other unknown or new situation in the classroom offered challenges that could induce fear and uncertainty which in turn led to emotional learners who could not respond appropriately or focus on education (see section 2.3.1). This fear was definitely one of the factors that contributed to learners' indecisiveness in the classroom, as will be discussed in section 5.3.1.

The third factor that could lead to indecisiveness, is that of favouritism. Most of the indecisive learners' parents steered the interview towards talking about their *other* child instead of about the child on which the interview was based, or where it was admitted that the other sibling takes too much of their time. The indecisive learners' performance in the classroom would then suffer, because if *another* sibling is favoured then their own efforts might be unnoticed (see section 2.3.3). This favouritism of the siblings would definitely cause lack of self-confidence and indecisiveness, whether at home or at school, because it has a starting point from which the lack of confidence and indecisiveness originates (see section 2.3.3).



The fourth influential aspect that I noted from the responses during the interviews, was the force of past experiences and their impact on behavioural patterns. Some cultures follow very strict traditions and these influence the raising of future generations, but some parents, who had an unfortunate childhood, are in fear of a recurrence of their own unhappy circumstances in the lives of their children and they then go to great lengths in an effort to avoid this (see section 2.3.1). They do not realise that they can inflict a different sort of unhappiness within the family, such as fear and stress, whilst trying to avoid the unhappiness *they* suffered, for example by smothering and dominating the children and by trying to control their lives (see section 2.3.1). This in turn could lead to emotional problems, a low self-esteem and indecision which will be reflected in the learners' school progression (see section 2.3.6).

5.3.3 Child-rearing styles

Pretorius (1998: 9) maintains that parents exert an influence on how their children develop an identity and how well their children reach self-actualisation. This is known as child-rearing styles. Parents play a determinant role in the establishment of the environment in which children develop and how much stimulation their children receive, as depicted by Vygotsky (see section 2.2.1). The Zone of Proximal Development does not necessarily have to occur in the classroom, but parents could also be a "scaffold" to support their children to bridge from their actual capabilities to their potential capabilities (see section 2.2.1).

The interviews served as vehicle to identify and display the pertinent child-rearing styles. The decisive learner's mother came across as a warm and loving mother who only had her children's best interests at heart. Although she is a single parent, her views on her children's lives in general is that her children should be raised with the correct values and that there remains open communication and a lot of love between her and her children. This warm and loving relationship at home, developed self-confidence which could be detected in the decisive learner's school performance as well (see section 2.3.3). The direct implication thereof is that the absence of stress and fear within the family setting, instilled positive behaviour at school (see section



2.3.1). None of the four indecisive participants' parents that were interviewed for the purpose of the research study portrayed a warm child-rearing style (see section 2.3.1). The child-rearing styles that were prominent were: permissive, dominant, tolerant and intolerant (see section 2.3.1). Dominance over the children at home causes them to be fearful, stressed and withdrawn, whereas permissiveness led to no routine and very few rules so their children have no guidance towards self-actualisation (see section 2.3.1).

Although these particular child-rearing styles are not necessarily all negative, the manner in which they are executed could lead to various outcomes. For example, the indecisive participants' parents all had different views on discipline. Even though some made use of the time-out system for discipline and others that of physical punishment, fearful situations arose and this fear was portrayed in the learners' behaviour in the classroom (see section 2.3.1). Most of the indecisive learners were emotional at points during the research and it was evident that they were not concerned about learning new skills and knowledge whilst being in this state (see section 2.3.1). Each home environment is unique and establishes the setting in which young learners develop and the child-rearing styles are just another factor that contributes to the making or breaking of their development (see section 2.2.1 & 2.3.1).

All these home environmental factors could influence young learners' disposition in the classroom. The following figure (figure 5.2) depicts that various factors have different outcomes on every learner which make them all unique individuals.

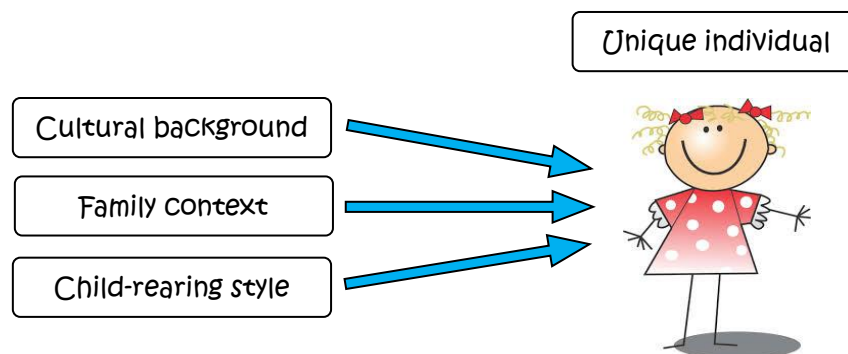


Figure 5.2: The home environment shapes every individual



Every learner is uniquely different from one another when they enter the classroom and therefore each case or scenario should be considered separately, especially when learners' disposition comes to light.

5.4 LEARNERS' DISPOSITION IN THE CLASSROOM

After observing the participants over a number of months, it was evident that there were a few dispositional factors that emerged from the data. Disposition, as defined by Upton (2009: 3) and Amsel (1992: 2), refers to a person's temperament, character or "habits" that are evident over time. In the research findings, there were three dispositional factors that emerged ever so often: Fear, confidence and motivation.

5.4.1 Young learners portraying fear in the classroom

According to Williams and Hill (2012: 307) the term "fear" is often associated with danger, whereas the term "apprehension" refers more to anxiety. For the purpose of this study, I will refer to learners' anxiety in the classroom as fear. Fear played a great role in the learners' overall performance in the classroom. When I observed the decisive learner throughout the research period, no fear was evident at all. With no fear present, she could confidently engage with various art materials and explore her own choices (see section 2.3.5). The same could not be said about the indecisive learners:

At the beginning of the study, the indecisive participants were hesitant and afraid to make own choices with regard to their own artwork and they were often afraid of what I would think of their completed work. As noted in section 5.2, family settings could play a role in creating fear in learners and it is then that these learners enter a classroom as fearful and emotional beings (see section 2.3.1). These learners were often quiet and withdrawn from the other learners and there were even times that they became emotional to the point where it made them negative about themselves and their work. Even though making own choices contributes to a positive outlook, learners who are fearful will not engage in own decisions (see section 2.3.6).



Interestingly enough, there was often a kind of longing for affection, noticeable in these learners' behaviour; they wanted to be praised, or to be noticed, but it was evident that something was holding them back. Researchers maintain that learners' behaviour is not generic but that the environment in which they find themselves determines how they will react (see section 2.3.2). According to Vygotsky's theory on Social Constructivism the environment allows for gaining new information, so if the environment is negative, it influences learner's behaviour, which in turn will influence their learning (see section 2.2.2).

During the first few attempts of making own choices, some of the indecisive learners seemed overwhelmed by the large variety of art materials to choose from and I was concerned that they were swamped by being confronted with too many options and therefore felt unsettled and scared. Once I reduced the amount of art materials to choose from and created a motivational environment where the learners felt comfortable to make own choices, the learners seemed more at ease (see section 2.3.6). I came to the conclusion that although making choices is good for learners, it is important to ensure that the learners are not overwhelmed by the majority of options.

Apart from the fear of feeling overwhelmed by choices, there was also a definite fear of the teacher's response to their attempts. They displayed self-protective behaviour by hiding their artwork under the table or inside their lockers or they would cover it with their arms once the educator would approach. It was only with constant motivation, involvement and encouragement from the side of the educator and more capable peers that these indecisive learners came to realise that they had no reason to fear any reaction from the educator (see section 2.2.1). Throughout my time in the field, I noticed how the participants' fear was transformed into confidence and I observed an increase in a growing positive demeanour which in turn infused a belief in themselves and their choices (see section 2.3.6).



5.4.2 Confidence as the key to young learners' potential capability

At the beginning of the school year there were a number of learners who displayed a defined lack of confidence in the classroom. Confidence can be defined as the “strength of the ego” or one’s attentiveness of the amount of inherent capabilities (Runco, 2007: 299; Efland, 2002: 37). According to Csóti (2009: 12) persons who dispose of a high level of self-confidence, will also believe in themselves with pride and dignity.

According to the observation of these indecisive learners, they withdrew themselves from any form of activity in the classroom and were very hesitant once they were encouraged to engage in activities. Furthermore, these learners were shy, had a very low self-esteem, would keep to themselves, and would hardly speak during discussions (see section 2.3.6). This was a very clear indication that they were indecisive learners. The decisive learner, in turn, could easily interact with the other learners, was confident and independent about her own efforts to choose and other activities and had a lot of confidence outside the school as well (see section 2.2.1). A clear indication of a low self-esteem in indecisive learners was that during art activities, the indecisive learners would observe other learners and copy *their* work instead of trying by themselves (see section 2.3.6). During the course of the interviews with the parents, it was obvious that most of the indecisive learners’ lack of confidence started at home, mainly because of sibling and parental dominance (as explained in section 5.2). Once the learners gained confidence inside the classroom, they came to realise that *they* were in control of themselves and their own work instead of anyone else telling them how it should be done (see section 2.3.6).

There were times when I was unsure whether some of the indecisive learners would gain confidence, because they remained unresponsive, hesitant and withdrawn. I continued with art activities where the learners could make their own choices, sometimes individually and sometimes in small groups, and with time their confidence gradually grew (see section 2.3.5). The growing level of confidence caused renewed creativity, willingness to decide about choices, a vivid imagination,



voluntary social interaction and courage to engage in problem solving. There was a marked spirit of independence and achievement.

As a teacher, it was very important for me not to force the learners, but to keep on motivating them and their choices until they acquired their own confidence at *their* own pace (see section 2.3.6). It is important to keep in mind the main aim of education, which was after all to determine factors that inhibit young learners to make own choices as well as to identify corrective actions to support learners to become confident and independent in their social environment (see section 2.3.6).

5.4.3 Young learners need motivation to gain self-confidence

Motivation is an essential method of encouragement to assist a person's perseverance (Wiseman & Hunt, 2014: 8–9). When a person praises learners for their efforts, attempts and good behaviour, it motivates them to reach their full potential (Csóti, 2009: 108). During the course of the study the indecisive learners needed constant prodding and motivation before they even attempted to make own choices, or to even try things by themselves, but it was evident that the constant motivation inspired them to use their creative abilities (see section 2.3.3).

Most of the indecisive learners had no motivation during activities other than art activities. During discussions, free play activities, lunch period and outdoor play (to name but a few) these learners needed constant motivation to take part, to interact with the other learners or to attempt the activities by themselves. There were times when they would say they were scared to try or that they doubted their own abilities and it was then that emotional and sometimes negative behaviour occurred (see section 2.3.3).

By allowing the learners to make their own choices, with regard to their own artwork, it gave them the opportunity to realise their own creativity, their own strengths and thus indirectly motivate themselves, as opposed to educators who make choices on behalf of (see section 2.3.6). It became apparent that if the learners lacked self-confidence, they found it hard to motivate themselves and it was then when I had to



step in to provide them with the motivation they needed to become assertive and make own choices confidently. Patience and determination were two key instruments in persevering as part of my endeavour to motivate and encourage the sometimes passive respondents. Some indecisive learners reacted immediately to my motivational remarks and gestures, whereas others needed more time to digest the encouragement. It was important to keep on motivating these learners, to praise them for their slightest efforts and not to deprive them of their own choices, because the more opportunities the learners had to make their independent choices, the better their classroom performance became (see section 2.3.6).

Figure 5.3 portrays that motivation leads to self-confidence which in turn out weighs fear in young learners.

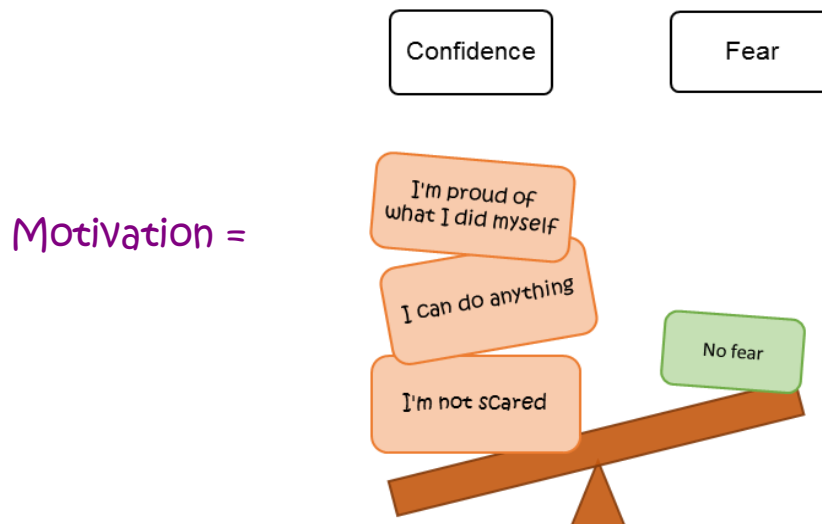


Figure 5.3: The influence of motivation on fear and self-confidence

As time progressed it was evident that motivation improved indecisive learners' self-confidence and the more self-confidence they gained, the more the fear decreased. Once their fear as inhibitory factor was out of the way, the learners were already one step closer to being decisive.



5.5 LEARNER BEHAVIOUR

The third theme that surfaced from the analysed data was learner behaviour. According to Bush and Jones (2010: 2) behaviour is the actions that are visible to other people. The three categories that complied with the theme of behaviour were: indecision, making choices and interaction (as portrayed in figure 5.1).

5.5.1 Indecisive behaviour of young learners in the classroom

Indecision is the difficulty or fear to make choices (see section 2.3.6). It was not difficult to distinguish between a decisive and an indecisive learner in the classroom. One of the first key factors of indecision was that these learners were afraid to try things by themselves due to their low self-esteem (see section 2.3.6). The indecisive learners would often struggle to decide upon choices given to them or would rather not choose anything at all instead of exploring and experimenting with options given to them. It was clear that the indecisive learners lacked self-confidence and although they would acknowledge the different options from which they could choose, for example, different art mediums, they would then rather settle for an art medium with which they were familiar and confident (see section 2.3.6).

Another indication of indecisiveness was when I noticed learners not having confidence with certain skills, for example, cutting with scissors, holding a paintbrush correctly or being able to blow through a straw for blow painting (see section 2.3.6). If the learners lacked the needed skills in question, it had a direct negative influence on the self-esteem, which in turn led to indecisiveness.

Own choice-making was introduced to support learners with indecisive behaviour. This was based on Vygotsky's process of scaffolding where a stronger learner supported an indecisive learner to reach their potential capabilities (see section 2.2.1). Learners with a very low self-esteem as well as the learners who had not mastered the necessary skills for a five to six year old, did find it difficult at first to make own choices (see section 2.3.2). Therefore group work was introduced, ensuring that the group had at least one decisive learner to support indecisive



learners with a low self-esteem as described by Vygotsky's theory on social development (see section 2.2.1). Learners working together in small groups proved to counter indecision and to boost the indecisive learners' self-confidence (see section 2.3.6). Once the self-confidence was enhanced, making own choices came easier and the learners had more confidence to work individually (see section 2.3.6).

The development of decisiveness did not happen overnight, but with the support and motivation from an educator and more capable peers it gradually occurred over time (see section 2.2.1 & 2.3.5). Once these learners became more decisive, they could make own choices more independently and could discover their hidden creativity and imagination (see section 2.3.6).

5.5.2 Young learners' independent choices with regard to their artwork

Own choices allow young learners to feel in control of their own decisions (see section 2.3.3). The purpose of the research study was to identify factors that contributed to indecisive behaviour as well as to contemplate corrective actions that could support young learners' indecisiveness. The focus was, therefore, on the deliberate and unintentional choices of the learners during engagement in art activities.

Decisive learners revelled in the wonder of an array of choices affording them multiple opportunities for self-expression through exploration, experimenting and discovering new ways of their creativity in their environment with materials and other learners (see section 2.2.2). Unfortunately the same cannot be said about the indecisive learners. For most of the indecisive learners, making own choices seemed to overwhelm them, as they were not familiar with the privilege of making own decisions and the first, very obvious reason was that they did not have a lot of self-confidence to begin with. Without self-confidence, these learners definitely did not have experimentation and exploration on their minds. That was why group work was incorporated to see whether intervention and influence of decisive learners could affect the indecisive learners, a strategy suggested by Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Group work gave indecisive learners a new lease of life and



renewed energy to overcome the fear of trying. They gained new inspiration and benefitted from the help of the more capable learners. Group work allowed indecisive learners to reach their potential capabilities which they previously did not know they had (see sections 2.2.1). In the long run, it was evident that own choices had a positive influence on indecisive learners' self-confidence, but only once they were familiar with it. The higher the level of self-confidence, the easier they found it to make their own independent choices (see section 2.3.6).

A lot of readings state that making choices benefits young learners, because it is a process that occurs in *their* own time, and although I agree with these studies, I did find that young learners develop at their own pace (see section 2.3.6). Each of the four indecisive learners for the research study, reached their higher level of self-confidence at different periods in the study. As time progressed and the indecisive learners gained self-confidence, independent choices definitely improved, because they were able to work on a level that they could relate to (see section 2.3.6).

When these learners had the opportunity to make their own choices it allowed me, as the teacher, to really acknowledge matters in the classroom which could very easily be overlooked. Firstly, there was an instance where one of the participant's creativity, own choices and thought processes were almost overlooked and interpreted as "silliness" or work that was "spoiled", instead of viewing it as a contribution to their knowledge and part of their developmental progress in creating art (see sections 2.2.1). If I (as an educator) made choices for them, they would not have discovered their own capabilities and this could have hindered their development, especially their creative development (see section 2.3.2). It showed how easy it is to suppress young learners' thought processes and their creativity if one does not try to come down to *their* level (see section 2.3.2). It is important to remember that educators can *assist* indecisive learners through the process of scaffolding, as stipulated in Vygotsky's theory of Social Development, where support is given without taking away learning opportunities (see section 2.2.1).

Secondly, young learners' own making of choices allowed me to see what art materials, supplies and skills they preferred to use and which ones they rather



avoided. This led me to see which areas needed attention, for example if the indecisive learner avoided using scissors for cutting, it could mean that he or she did not have the self-confidence to use it or might not know yet how to use it. Therefore I could step in and assist the learner with the particular areas that needed support, but in order to do that, appropriate time had to be allocated just for visual arts (see section 2.3.5). I was fortunate enough to conduct the research at a private preschool where approximately fifty minutes were allocated to visual arts per day. Had I conducted research at a school where visual arts received limited time, as prescribed by the CAPS curriculum, I might not have come to the conclusions during the same period that the study was scheduled (see section 2.3.5).

5.5.3 The positive influence of social interaction

Social interaction benefits young learners because they actively engage with one another where a decisive learner can support an indecisive learner and confidence is inculcated (see section 2.2.1). After doing research on the benefits of group work for young learners, it was a definite confirmation that I should accommodate these in my study. This interaction was very beneficial for the indecisive participants because the more capable peers assisted indecisive learners to reach their full potential (see section 2.2.1). Vygotsky emphasises the importance of socialisation among learners and through the group work it was evident that indecisive learners could reach their full potential (see section 2.2.2).

While observing the learners during the research process, it was apparent that decisive learners found it much easier to interact with others. Indecisive learners, in turn, found it much harder. It was especially evident during free-play periods, where learners could choose what they wanted to do and what they wanted to play with, that the indecisive learners would keep to themselves. Interestingly enough, although these learners preferred to be by themselves most of the time, group work, which was incorporated with art activities, allowed indecisive learners to observe the more capable peers and this process contributed to their gaining knowledge which could otherwise have been lost (see section 2.2.1). At first, the indecisive learners seemed self-conscious to work in co-operation with others, but the more the



indecisive learners became familiar with group work, the more their willingness to communicate within the group and their confidence increased. That in turn allowed them to start enjoying their work and work more independently (see section 2.3.6).

Group work was never intended to “force” indecisive learners to interact with decisive learners, but merely to support their indecisiveness through social interaction as maintained by Vygotsky’s theory of Social Development (see section 2.2.1). In other words, group work was used as scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1896-1934) and consisted of pairs or small groups where at least one decisive learner was present. An art project was given to the learners and choice-making had to take place within the groups. Although group work is not considered as a “playful” act and more based on “working” together, it provided the opportunity for all the learners to communicate and interact with one another and that was a starting point for the indecisive learners to gain self-confidence to engage with others (see section 2.3.4 & section 2.3.6). It also provided support for indecisive learners’ overall development, because although the decisive learners would take the lead, the indecisive learners would look up to them and learn new skills, knowledge and self-confidence just as Vygotsky described in his theory of Social Development (see section 2.2.1).

The more group work activities there were, the more confident and relaxed the indecisive learners became. These learners started to give their own independent opinions and added their insights and imaginative ideas, because group work enhanced their self-confidence (see section 2.3.6). This group work proved to equip indecisive learners with the necessary self-confidence to function independently and to arrive at a level of exercising own choices during individual activities. Through long term social interaction, indecisive learners displayed the willingness to discover and weigh options, managing their own fears and self-doubt. Their level of creativity also increased and they no longer fought shy of making independent decisions, but to the contrary became enthusiastic developers of their own potential. They claimed their right to decide and experienced a new kind of power that had been lying dormant within them waiting to be unleashed (see section 2.2.1).



Figure 5.4 illustrates that confident behaviour can be promoted by giving young learners the opportunity to make their own choices during art activities, by having decisive behaviour and through interaction with other learners.

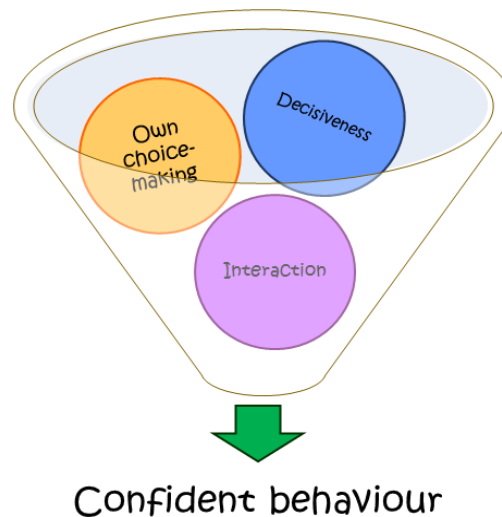


Figure 5.4: The promoting of confident behaviour

5.6 FACTORS AND CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

The rich layers of information that could be accessed through focused data analysis and the interpretation thereof, allowed me to discover key factors that could contribute to young learners' indecisiveness as well as discover the corrective actions to counter them. Table 5.1 summarises, first of all, the factors that may contribute to indecisive behaviour and then corrective actions that can be taken:



Table 5.1: Key factors and corrective action

Factors		
Home environment	Cultural influences	Parents making decisions about their children's lives
	Past experiences	Parents wish to avoid a repetition of <i>their</i> unfortunate childhood and therefore dominate and control their children
	Language	Learners are raised in one language but are sent to a school that educates in a different language
	Lack of parental involvement	Parents spend little time with their children due to work obligations. Nannies take care of them or otherwise the learners stay at school for long hours on end.
	Sibling rivalry	Siblings are dominating and competitive
	Favouritism	Parents favour one sibling above the other
	Child-rearing styles	The way parents raise their children sometimes causes fear and uncertainty in their own capabilities.
Disposition	Fear or trying themselves	Learners are scared to try things by themselves
	Learners feeling overwhelmed	When the learners are not used to something, or when there are too many choices, they feel overwhelmed.
	Fear of teachers' reaction	Learners are scared of what the teacher would say about their attempts and fear rejection.
	Lack of self-confidence	The indecisive learners lack self-confidence when they entered the classroom
Behaviour	Indecision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indecisive learners show fear to make own choices ▪ They display a lack of self-confidence ▪ These learners prefer to work by themselves ▪ Learners sometimes struggle with certain skills
Corrective action		
Motivation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Constantly praising and encouraging the indecisive learners ▪ A lot of patience is needed as some learners gain self-confidence earlier and others later
Choice-making		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Once the learners are familiar with making choices, their level of self-confidence increases and they become more decisive
Social interaction		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The more capable learners support the indecisive learners ▪ Indecisive learners observe other learners within group work ▪ Interaction supported learners' lack of self-confidence



The above-mentioned categories featured prominently and could easily be distinguished from the analysed data and from there it was easy to link them to a specific theme. These themes interlinked with one another and there was a clear connection between the different categories.

As seen in table 5.1, there are numerous potential factors that could lead to learners' indecisive behaviour during visual arts activities. These factors and corrective actions are the meaningful results of data interpretation.

5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The interpretation of the data provided detail equipping me to interpret the role of the various factors that contribute to learners' indecisive behaviour in the classroom as well as the corrective action that could support this. When decisiveness is supported by educators in the classroom, it could make a difference in young learners' future education. Henning (2011: 159) and Eckhoff (2008: 463) state that visual arts are a perfect way for learners to develop holistically. Therefore visual arts as a subject is a wonderful medium to guide young learners in reducing their indecisiveness.

Chapter 6 provides a summary of the research findings, the research conclusions and the research-based recommendations.

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CHAPTER 6

Summary, conclusions and recommendations



6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Chapter 6 was to summarise the perspectives derived from the literature review as well as the empirical research findings. Conclusions were drawn and the research questions that guided this study answered. The next step is to share the final recommendations for parents, teachers, policies and further research. These recommendations can serve as further support for young learners in the Foundation Phase.

6.2 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section contains a summary of both the literature that was read for this study as well as a summary of the empirical research findings.

6.2.1 Summary of key literature findings

Parents and teachers are the key role players in the education of the emergent learners and are essentially responsible for sustained guidance, constant encouragement and carefully-considered influence. They should avail themselves to provide a learning environment that allows room for independent making of choices as the freedom to choose will strengthen the learners' characters. These educational investors are responsible for providing a learner-centred environment that enables the caterpillar to transform into a beautiful butterfly as part of their holistic cycle (see section 2.3.1). If, however, the home environment becomes negative, the young



learners' scholastic experiences are influenced negatively and their development hindered. This form of neglect and dominance then often manifests itself in indecisive behaviour in the classroom. Research has shown that there are numerous factors that contribute to unhappy or insecure home environments. Young learners need a safe and secure environment for successful development and a positive behaviour to take place (see section 2.3.1).

The environment of a classroom, where there are opportunities to express themselves through creativity, also proves to be of essence for young learners' impending development (see section 2.3.2). Researchers maintain that when young learners engage in visual art activities, the process thereof is natural and spontaneous (see section 2.3.5). Young learners should be allowed to make own choices during art activities, because not only do they become adept through this process, but independent making of choices contributes to their self-confidence and promotes positive behaviour. Learners are researchers in their own right because they experiment with opportunities through own decisions (see section 2.3.6). Responsibility for and making own choices could contribute to education, because educators can witness the needs in young learners, therefore teachers should not withhold opportunities from learners to make own choices, but rather support and motivate them and create an art environment where they can make their own choices.

If learners, however, enter a classroom as indecisive, they will not be able to enjoy or even experience the benefits that making own choices hold for development. These learners would be plagued by doubts in their own capabilities. They would be too afraid to try things by themselves and would be dependent on others (see section 2.3.6). Social constructivism has proven to be very valuable for young learners who need the support of a stronger learner to reach their own potential capability (see section 2.2.1 & 2.2.2). During the process of art-making, young learners often engage with others, whether it is through communication, observation or working together in groups (see section 2.2.1). It is through this interaction with others that young learners often gain skills, knowledge and most importantly,



overcome their low self-esteem that interferes with independent decision making (see section 2.3.6).

In order for young learners to make own choices or to engage with other learners in groups to promote self-confidence for making own choices during visual arts activities, there should be adequate time during the day for visual arts. Unfortunately the allocated time for visual arts for Grade R learners, according to the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) of South African schools, is only approximately one hour a week (see section 2.3.6). Researchers suggest that visual arts deserves a bigger part of a curriculum for young learners. Artwork, in itself, supports the development of problem solving, social, language and mathematical skills. If visual arts have so many benefits for young learners, then adjusting the curriculum should be considered.

The literature that I studied gave me a lot of insight into the benefits of visual arts and own choice-making for young learners' development. Literature on Vygotsky's theory of Social Constructivism enabled me to understand that a stronger learner can support other learners to reach their potential capabilities.

6.2.2 A short overview of the empirical research findings of this study

One decisive participant and four indecisive emergent learners participated in this multiple case study. The study took place at a preschool situated in a suburb of Pretoria. The classroom consisted of 25 Grade R learners (five to six year old learners). Interviews with the parents, observation, photographs, artefacts, reflective journal, open-interviews and informal conversations with the learners allowed me to gain sufficient data. Through inductive data analysis and interpretation, the following findings were made:

6.2.2.1 Decisive participant

The decisive learner is confident in the classroom as well as outside the school context. Although the mother is a single-parent, their home environment is a stable,



warm and loving context which provides a solid and positive foundation (see section 4.3.1). The mother's perspective includes a prominent awareness of the importance of proper values. Observation enabled me to see that the decisive learner showed confidence and decisive behaviour during class activities. No fear was present when she was faced with making her own choices and she confidently engaged with various art materials. The decisive learner enjoyed interacting with other learners and would often take the lead and through this process, support less decisive learners (see section 4.3.1).

6.2.2.2 Indecisive participants

There were various factors that were at the heart of the four indecisive participants' passivity. Some families have very traditional beliefs where the parents of the learners decide what they would become one day. This had an apparent effect of unhappiness and became a cycle that continued throughout generations (see section 4.3.2). A lot of the learners in the school are raised according to their family's specific mother tongue and when a different language is used for education, it causes fear and a low self-esteem (see section 4.3.5).

A safe and stable environment could provide young learners with self-confidence and the ability to express themselves. However, the environments of the indecisive learners lacked stability. The parents spent very little time with their children, either being too busy with business requirements or nannies being appointed to substitute the parents (see section 5.3.2). Sibling rivalry was a serious cause for unhappiness and parents favouring one child to the other, resulted in inferiority and feelings of incompetence (see section 4.3.3). Some parents were concerned about their own past experiences that caused *their* own unhappiness and by concentrating too hard on not reliving their pasts, they failed to recognise the unhappiness they inflicted (see section 4.3.3).

The types of child-rearing styles that the parents unconsciously used to raise their children with, has an apparent effect on their children's behaviour. Dominant child-rearing caused definite fear and stress within the learners and this became obvious



once the learners enter the classroom (see section 5.3.3). There is no correct child-rearing style a parent can follow, as maintained earlier, because it is an unconscious approach of raising children. The behaviour and involvement of parents in their children's lives will play a different role in each child-rearing style.

When the indecisive learners were challenged with own making of choices with regards to their artwork, they often seemed hesitant and afraid. The family setting, with reference to the parents' lack of involvement in their children's lives, sibling rivalry, favouritism and competitive siblings, could possibly be contributing factors that cause fear. This fear made learners quiet and withdrawn from the rest of the group (see section 4.3.4). During the first few attempts of making own choices, some indecisive learners were very overwhelmed by the variety of art materials they could use. It was only once I reduced the amount of art materials they could choose from, that they seemed less snowed down (see section 4.3.4). Some of the learners would also be afraid of my reaction upon completion of their artwork. They would put their artwork in their bags and under their desks in an effort to conceal it, all in fear of being judged (see section 5.4.1).

Something that stood out very clearly was the lack of self-confidence in the indecisive learners. Their self-esteem was very low, they would mainly keep to themselves and would hardly ever participate in discussions. These indecisive learners had no confidence to create their own artwork and would rather look at other learners' artwork and copy them instead (see section 5.4.2). Interviews with the parents led me to believe that the learners' lack of confidence started at home (see section 5.4.2). It became clear that once these learners gained self-confidence, and they gained it in *their own* time, they felt more in control of themselves and of their artwork. Self-confidence allowed their imagination, creativity, their own choice-making, communication skills, interaction with others, problem solving skills and independence to come forward (see section 5.4.2).

The indecisive learners had no motivation to complete activities in the class. They needed constant motivation to take part, to interact with others and to attempt making independent choices (see section 5.4.3). The indecisive learners' responses



always reflected their fear of failing or their lack of confidence in their own ability claiming that they “could not do it” and it was at times like these that they became emotional or showed negative behaviour (see section 4.3.2). It was clear that indecisive learners could not motivate themselves and I, as their teacher, had to step in to provide them with motivation. Again, these learners did not all responded immediately to my motivational efforts but became involved in the course of time.

Indecisive behaviour was not difficult to identify in the learners. Interestingly when learners had not mastered a specific skill, for example to cut with scissors on a line, or to hold a paintbrush correctly, they would avoid that particular activity and prefer to use something they are familiar with (see sections 4.3.5 & 4.3.2). Working in smaller groups, was introduced as a strategy where a stronger, decisive peer, could assist an indecisive learner (see section 5.5.1).

Making of own choices was very overwhelming for the indecisive learners at first. It was obvious that they were never before exposed to the actual freedom to choose, but were rather dependent on others to make choices for them (see section 5.5.2). These learners had no self-confidence to make own choices during their artwork so they had to be “taught” how to make own choices. That is where group work seemed to be a wonderful diversion, because the indecisive learners would observe and listen to the decisive learners and through the “scaffolding process”, gain confidence to make own choices (see section 5.5.2). Allowing learners to make own choices aided me, as the educator, to see what art materials, and skills the learners avoided. That way I knew which areas to focus on and to support them to develop those skills, for example to be able to cut with scissors.

Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) (Wessels, 2010: 3) maintains maintained that a stronger and more capable peer can assist another learner to reach their potential capabilities (see section 2.2.1). Social interaction supported the indecisive learners to gain self-confidence which eventually led to making own choices (see section 5.5.3). At first it was difficult for the indecisive learners to interact in small groups as it was unfamiliar to them and because they already had a low self-esteem. As time progressed, however, the more familiar the indecisive learners became with group work which in



turn had a positive influence on their self-confidence. Social interaction, as a rule, was incorporated to support the indecisive learners through social constructivism (see section 2.2.2).

From my empirical research it became clear that there were internal as well as external factors that influenced learners' indecisive behaviour. Internal factors stemmed from disposition: fear, the learner's self-confidence and lack of motivation and the external factors came from the home environment: cultural background, the family context and child-rearing styles.

6.3 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

After the summary provided of the literature as well as the research findings, the research questions (see section 1.4) will be answered in order to draw final conclusions of this research study. The secondary questions will be answered first as they lead up to answering the main question of the study:

6.3.1 Secondary research question 1

What are the theoretical insights concerning indecisive behaviour during visual arts activities?

Chapter 2 emphasizes that the subject visual arts is of great importance for young learners, because it contributes greatly to their holistic development, which includes their emotional well-being (see section 2.3.5). When learners are indecisive, they will struggle with making own choices and will thus not be able to benefit from the value of visual arts. This indecision goes hand in hand with lack of self-confidence (see section 2.3.6). When young learners do not have self-confidence, they will become fearful and hesitant to experiment with the various different elements of art. In turn, this fear will persist unless proper measures are taken to support learners to gain self-confidence and become decisive learners. Social interaction, in the form of small group work, helped to deal with indecisive behaviour. The stronger and more decisive learner supports the other learners within the group to gain self-confidence as well as to reach their potential capability (see section 2.2.1 & 2.2.2).



6.3.2 Secondary research question 2

What are the curriculum requirements for visual arts in the Foundation Phase, grade R?

Readings on literature indicated that not much time is spent on visual arts during the Foundation Phase, grade R (see section 2.3.5). South Africa’s current curriculum, Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) are divided into three sections: Home Languages, Mathematics and Life Skills, where Life Skills consist of Beginning Knowledge, Creative Arts, Physical Education and Personal and Social Well-being. The Creative arts are further divided into the performing arts: dancing, drama, music and then also into visual arts. The following diagram will put this into perspective:

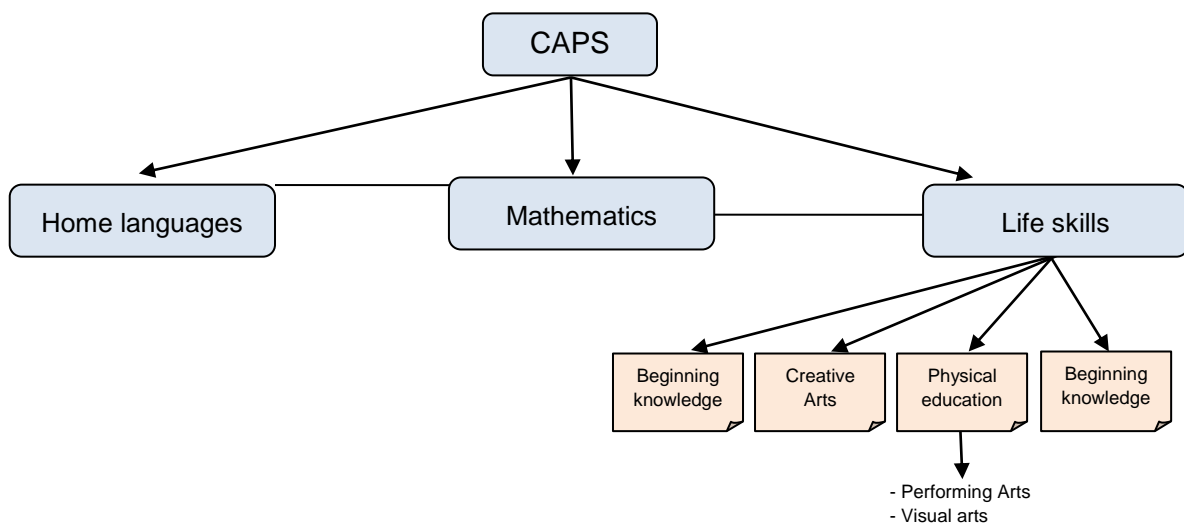


Figure 6.1: A schematic layout of the CAPS document with the focus on Creative Arts

According to the CAPS document, twenty hours per term is dedicated to the Creative Arts. This time allocated is divided into ten hours for Performing Arts and ten hours for visual arts per school term. That means approximately fifteen minutes per day are spent on visual arts. Fifteen minutes per day is not adequate to optimise the benefits of visual arts. According to an arts lecturer at the University of Pretoria, there is no specific policy for visual arts. All visual art recommendations are from the CAPS document itself.



6.3.3 Secondary research question 3

Which contextual and dispositional factors play a role in inhibiting or encouraging learners to make own choices with regard to their own artwork?

Research findings that inhibited learners to make own choices during their own artwork, surfaced (see section 5.6). These factors were categorised into external and internal factors (see section 5.2). The external factors concerned home environment and were: cultural background (see section 5.3.1), family context (see section 5.3.2) and child-rearing styles (see section 5.3.3). The internal factors concerned disposition and embraced: fear (see section 5.4.1), self-confidence (see section 5.4.2) and a lack of motivation (see section 5.4.3).

6.3.4 Secondary research question 4

What corrective measures can be taken to overcome indecisive behaviour?

Through this research study, a number of corrective measures proved to be of value for indecisive learners. As a teacher, constant praising and motivation are essential for indecisive learners (see section 5.4.3). A simple: “Wow, I’m so proud that you did that all by yourself” is more than enough. Although it might not seem to be working at first, the learners seem to be oblivious of these remarks, and the more they hear it, the more they motivate them to try things by themselves. This brings me to point number two. Patience is very important (see section 5.4.3). Every learner is different from the other and therefore they will develop and become self-confident at their own pace.

Group work for these young learners really proved to be of value, especially when they worked in pairs or in small groups of three (see section 5.5.3). It is important that there are decisive learners in the group, because not only do they take the lead, but they also support the indecisive learners by “teaching” them things they otherwise would not have done. This was supported by Vygotsky’s theory of Social Constructivism (see section 2.2.2). Learners observe everything others do and in small groups this is less overwhelming than what it is on your own in a whole



classroom. This interaction supported learner's self-confidence, and the more confident they became, the less they relied on the support of others and the more they could work by themselves as decisive learners (see section 5.5.3).

6.3.5 Main research question

Why do some Foundation Phase learners experience indecisive behaviour during visual arts activities?

Some Foundation Phase learners experience indecisive behaviour, because they enter the classroom as fearful learners with a very low self-esteem. Various external and internal factors create fear in these learners and this in turn creates a low self-esteem (see section 5.5). Fear is most probably one of the main factors of indecisive behaviour. When learners have a low self-esteem and no self-confidence, they cannot make own choices, even during a simple activity as creating art. Although educators cannot correct the external factors that contribute to indecisive behaviour, there are measures they can take to support these learners' to overcome the outcomes that the internal factors cause. This study looked only at indecisive behaviour during visual arts activities and it can be assumed that indecisive learners will also show indecisive behaviour during activities other than visual arts.

The following recommendations could guide parents, teachers and educational institutions to support indecisive learners and further research might find more solutions to indecisive behaviour during and outside visual art activities.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

With reference to the findings of my research, the following recommendations are made for parents, teachers, and policies as well as for further research:

6.4.1 Recommendations for parents

The following recommendations are directed at parents in order to promote decisive behaviour from within the home environment:



❖ Recommendation 1

Parents should not be focused on the unhappy upbringing they themselves might have had, but should rather focus on the opportunity they have to raise their own children to the best of their ability. If the parents are scared about raising their children, the children will sense the fear and this will lead to indecisive and fearful behaviour.

❖ Recommendation 2

Parents need to make time to interact with their children. Interaction with their children will provide a warm and loving foundation where the children will feel cherished and loved. This will lead to self-confidence and in turn promote decisive behaviour. Compare the following practical suggestions listed for parents to get involved in their children's lives without it impeding their busy schedules:

- Instead of just dropping the child off at school, give them a hug and assure them that you will see them later.
- Leave a written message in the child's lunch box. The teacher can read the message to the child.
- When the learners are fetched from school, tell them how much they were missed during the day.
- In the car, on the way home, ask the children how their day was, what the best part of their day was or if there is anything that happened they wished to share.
- Let the child help the parent with dinner, even if it is just by mixing the contents in the bowl.
- When it is bed time, take ten minutes to read the child a bed time story.
- During a shopping spree, let the child take the item off the shelf and put it into the trolley or basket. This involves the child and they will feel as if the parents involve them with something important.

❖ Recommendation 3

Parents should listen to both sides of a problem when sibling rivalry occurs. They should not favour one sibling above the other, but should talk to their children about



the issue at hand and look together for solutions to the problem. This will show the learners that the parent makes time to listen to them as well as take heed of their explanations. Learners can thus be taught that there are solutions to problems and that it is acceptable to turn to others for support.

6.4.2 Recommendations for teachers

The following recommendations are focused on teachers for the promotion of decisive behaviour in the classroom environment:

❖ Recommendation 4

Teachers should motivate learners as much as possible, even if it does not seem to be working. Constant motivation will support learners' self-confidence and the more self-confidence they gain, the more decisive they will be. Listed below are a few examples of motivational phrases:

- “Just believe in yourself and you will be able to do it!”
- “Well done, I am really proud of you for trying by yourself”
- “I cannot wait to see what you are making!”
- “The more you practise, the better you will become!”
- “Wow, did you make this all by yourself? This looks great!”

❖ Recommendation 5

Teachers should avoid “teacher-directed” artwork and should not be afraid to let young learners make their own choices during visual arts. Making own choices promotes holistic development in young learners, but it also allows the teachers to see the gaps in the learners' development and skills that are lacking. By noticing these needs, the teacher can then focus to assist with them.

❖ Recommendation 6

Teachers should make use of small groups during artwork, especially where a decisive learner can support an indecisive learner. Group work allows indecisive learners to reach their potential capability so that they have self-confidence to make own choices.



6.4.3 Recommendations for policies

The following recommendations are made for policies in education:

❖ Recommendation 7

Policies should be adjusted to accommodate visual arts in the Foundation Phase, because there is not adequate time dedicated to visual arts in the current curriculum. Visual arts allow young learners to embrace their own creativity through own choice-making, which contributes greatly to their holistic development. Furthermore, visual arts as a subject supports decisive behaviour, which in turn, contributes to learners overall scholastic achievement.

❖ Recommendation 8

A separate policy for visual arts should be developed. Home language and Mathematics can very easily be integrated with visual arts and therefore adequate time would still be spent on Home language and Mathematics. As mentioned above, visual arts as a subject has pertinent value for young learners' holistic development and with the integration of the other learning areas, the young learners can only gain from this.

6.4.4 Recommendations for further research

The following recommendations are made for further research:

❖ Recommendation 9

Small group work proved to be of value for young learners with indecisive behaviour. Whereas this study focused on indecisive behaviour during visual arts, further research should focus on small group work in the learning areas of Home Language and Mathematics activities in the Foundation Phase.



6.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The aim of this research study was to look at factors that inhibit independent choices during visual arts as well as look at the corrective actions that can be taken to support the indecisive behaviour. The empirical research provided evidence of factors that were internal as well as external and further research found corrective action to support indecisive learners.

Chapter 6 concluded in a summary of both the perspectives from literature as well as those of my empirical research findings. Conclusions of the research were formulated, concluding in recommendation for parents, the teachers, and the curriculum as well as for further research.

This empirical study allowed me to gain insight into the indecisive behaviour of young learners in the Foundation Phase. It was an eye opener to see how indecisiveness influences young learners' self-confidence, because without self-confidence no appropriate learning can take place. It was enlightening to find that social constructivism was so beneficial for the indecisive learners in building their decisive behaviour during visual arts. I trust that this research study will contribute to the education of young learners and that further research will be done on the manifestations and impact of learners' indecisive behaviour.

APPENDICES

Appendix A:

Letter to the principal

Appendix B:

Assent form for the children

Appendix C:

Consent letter for the parents

Appendix D:

Daily programme of the school where the research were conducted

Appendix E:

Observational checklist (with the children)

Appendix F:

List of addressed topics (interviews with the children)

Appendix G:

Interview guide (interviews with the parents)

Appendix H:

Ethical clearance certificate

APPENDIX A



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Tel: (012) 420 5245
Department Early Childhood Education
Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria
0001 PRETORIA

2014-01-16
Waterkloof Pre-Primary
317 Milner Street
Waterkloof
0181

Dear Leoni Kritzinger

APPLICATION FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN THE GRADE R CLASS

I am currently doing my Master's degree at the University of Pretoria and wish to apply for permission to conduct research in the grade R class. My title is: "Corrective actions for indecisive behaviour of Foundation Phase learners during art activities". The research will involve informal interviews with learners while they are busy creating an artwork during a visual arts lesson and I shall also be observing them during this process. My study aims at determining factors that could contribute to children's indecisive behaviour in the art process and then to recommend corrective action to overcome indecisiveness.

To obtain data, I will make use of observations, take photographs of the children as well as record interviews on a digital audio recorder (with the parents' consent). The children's privacy will be maintained through the use of pseudonyms as well as blackening out any visible faces. The audio tape containing interviews will be destroyed afterwards.

My research will not interfere with the curriculum as the creation of artworks form part of their normal class activities scheduled at a given time.

As the learners are minors, letters of informed consent will also be directed to parents.

Should you agree to grant me permission to do my research, please complete the attached form. Your co-operation is much appreciated in this regard.

Kind regards

L. Westhof

Dr MG Steyn (supervisor)

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

I, _____, principal of _____ school gives permission that the researcher, _____ may conduct research in the Grade R class.

PRINCIPAL DATE

SCHOOL STAMP

APPENDIX B





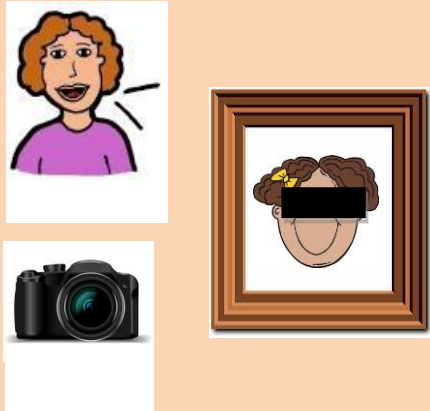




ASSESSMENT FORM FOR YOUNG CHILDREN





Project title: Corrective actions for indecisive behaviour of Foundation Phase learners during art activities

Researcher: Liesel Westhof

	<u>Oral description</u>	<u>Visual description</u>
1.	I wish to introduce you to my research project. When the researchers conduct an investigation on a research topic, it means that they want to learn more about something. Compare the following practical steps when conducting my research. If there are different materials on the desk (glue, paint, crayons, scissors, and papers) and your teacher says that you can choose the ones that you want to use, then some children know immediately which ones they want to use and other children take longer to choose. It is my intention to find out why some children sometimes take longer to choose.	
2.	This study will aid in understanding why children are reluctant and take long to make choices. The researcher aims to find solutions to the problem of hesitating and taking long before making a decision to participate. Once the reason for their behaviour is discovered, it will be easy to assist the learners when they are engaged in their tasks. By helping them it might teach them not to be scared to try new things.	
3.	The study will be conducted over a semester. In other words: There will be school every day for a while, then a holiday, then some more school for a while, and then another holiday. The study will continue until the second holiday.	
4.	There will be no risks involved in this study. Learners will just do artwork during the same period as they always do in class (After the morning ring activities and before pack-up time/tea time). The art projects will be linked to the theme of the week so that it forms part of the daily programme.	
5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When learners do their artwork I will walk around and look what you are doing (observation). I will write down the things that I see in a journal (similar to a diary). While you are doing your art, I would like to take photos. When I use the photo for my research (when I want to learn more about something) and your faces are visible, I will cover it with a blurred square. The reason why I will do this is to protect you so that other people that read it will not recognise them. (Photographs) While you are working on you artwork, I might want to ask you a question if I see something interesting, e.g. "I see you keep on using wool. Why is this?" If I use something that you have said then I will use a pseudonym. A pseudonym is when you change the real name with another name so that you are protected. If I do make use of a recorder to record questions and answers, only I will listen to them and then afterwards the tape will be destroyed. 	

6.	<p>Before they agree to help with the research or not, you are welcome to ask me any questions about the research. If you are at home and you are wondering about anything or have a question then, you are welcome to phone me. (082 378 2387)</p>	
7.	<p>If you say that you want to be a participant in this study and later on you decide that you do not want to be part of it anymore, you can tell me at any time: "I don't want to be a part anymore." I assure you that no one will be angry with you if you do not want to carry on being a participant.</p>	

Before you decide that you want to be a part of this study or not, you can ask me anything that you are wondering about or that you have a question to ask about.

<p>The following box contains two faces. The first one is the smiling face that is showing thumbs up and the second one is a sad face that is showing thumbs down. If you would like to participate in this study, you can encircle the face that is smiling. If you do not want to participate in the study, you can encircle the face that is not smiling.</p>	
	
<p>Yes, I want to be a participant</p>	<p>No, I do not want to be a participant</p>

Name of the child: _____ **Name of the child (written by themselves)** _____ **Date:** _____

Person obtaining the assent: _____ **Signature:** _____ **Date:** _____

I have explained and discussed this research study with _____ and used appropriate language as well as explained difficult terms that he/she could understand on his/her level. I believe that I have fully informed him/her of the nature of the study and I have explained that no risk will come to them by being participants. I believe that he/she understood the explanation of the study as there are pictures to illustrate the research, accompanied by verbal explanation for each aspect and assent to participate in this study.

APPENDIX C



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Tel: (012) 420 5245
Department Early Childhood Education
Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria
0001 PRETORIA

Dear Parent

APPLICATION FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH INVOLVING YOUR CHILD

I am a grade R teacher at Waterkloof Primary and currently busy with my Master's degree which involves a research project entitled: "Corrective actions for indecisive behaviour of Foundation Phase learners during art activities."

I wish to ask your permission to involve your child in this study. This will involve conducting an informal interview with your child during visual arts, when your child will be busy creating artwork. I shall also observe your child during this process in order to get a better understanding of his/her choices. For the purpose of the research, pseudonyms will be used in order to protect your child's identity.

I also request permission to take photographs of the learners while engaged in creating their artwork. The photos will entail the art-making process and of their artwork and should any faces appear on the photographs, your child's face will be disguised in order to protect his/her identity. You are allowed to withdraw your child from this research project at any time and no learner will be forced to answer questions if they do not feel like it.

This research will try and determine factors that contribute to children's indecisiveness during the creation of their artwork and I also hope to find corrective action in order to overcome indecisiveness.

Should you give permission, please fill in the letter of informed consent on the next page.

Kind regards

L. WESTHOF
RESEARCHER

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

Your child's participation in this research is voluntary and confidential. The school and your child's name will not be identified within the research. If you have any questions about the research, you are welcome to contact me, Liesel Westhof, by 082 378 2387.

I, _____, parent/guardian of _____ give permission that Liesel Westhof can use my child as a participant for her research study.

Signature of parent/guardian

Date

APPENDIX D

<u>Type of activity:</u>	<u>Times:</u>
Arrival and free play	07:00 – 08:00
Breakfast and toilet routine	08:00 – 08:15
<u>Morning ring:</u> Bible, weather chart, theme discussion, movement, music, numeracy and literacy	08:15 – 09:00
Creative time and free play	09:00 – 09:50
Tidy up time and toilet routine	09:50 – 10:10
Tea time and Free play outside	10:10 – 11:30
Pack up time/toilet routine/washing hands	11:30 – 11:45
Story time	11:45 – 12:00
Lunch and resting time	12:00 – 14:00
Aftercare	14:00 – 17:30

APPENDIX E

Observational Checklist – (with the children)

Project: Corrective actions for indecisive behaviour of Foundation Phase learners during art activities

1. Does the child arrive at school in time for the art period of the daily programme?

Comments:

2. Does the child prefer to work by him/herself?

Comments:

3. Does the child show indecisive behaviour when creating artwork?

Comments:

4. Does the child look anxious when he/she starts the artwork?

Comments:

5. Does the child go back to the teacher because of uncertainties with regard to his/her artwork?

Comments:

6. Does the child complete work at a slow pace?

Comments:

7. Does the child interact with other peers even though he/she works alone?

Comments:

8. Does the child show excitement during the art-making process?

Comments:

9. Does the child seem patient when creating his/her own artwork?

Comments:

Does the child want to help other children when he/she notices them struggling?

Comments:

APPENDIX F

List of addressed topics – (interviews with the children)

Types of spontaneous questions that might arise:

1. What do you enjoy most during art activities?
2. I see that you prefer to use the runny glue (*ponal*) more than the other glue (*pritt*). Why is that?
3. Tell me more about this project that you are creating with the toilet rolls, string, egg boxes, etc.
4. Did you talk to your friends beforehand about what you are going to do or is this your own idea?
5. Do you prefer/enjoy to work by yourself or would you rather work with a friend? Why?
6. Did you feel excited about creating your own artwork? Why?
7. I see that Peter helped you with your artwork. Why is that?

APPENDIX G

Interview guide - List of addressed topics – (interviews with the parents)

Project: Corrective actions for indecisive behaviour of Foundation Phase learners during art activities

Questions:

1. What language do you speak at home?
2. Has your child been in a preschool before coming here? What was the reason that you brought him/her to this school?
3. How many children do you have? What is the position of your child in your family? Eldest, middle child or youngest?
4. What is the age gap between them?
5. Is your child sometimes dominated by the other siblings? E.g. if he/she struggles with something, does the other one want to help instead of your child trying by him/herself?
6. Tell me about your family's routine at home after you have fetched your child from school.
7. Please describe your child in the way you see him/her.
8. What type of responsibilities (chores) do you give your child at home?
9. What activities do your child like doing at home?
10. Can your child keep him/herself busy at home or must you provide ideas to keep him/her busy?
11. Does your child ask a lot of questions? In other words, do you see your child as inquisitive?
12. How does your child react in the presence of strangers?
13. What do you see as the most important responsibilities of a parent?
14. How do you discipline your child?
15. Do you think children should be allowed to make own choices on their level? Why?
16. According to research, art activities can contribute a lot to children's confidence, but according to the current Curriculum of the schools, only one hour is dedicated to visual arts per week. How do you feel about that?
17. What would it mean to you if your child could be less indecisive and more confident at school?
18. As a parent, what are your expectations of a good teacher? What do you expect from your child's teacher?

APPENDIX H

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