



# **Drawing pedagogy guide in early childhood education and care - Perspectives from Finland and China**

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- Perspectives from Finland and China**

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The purpose of this functional thesis is to develop drawing pedagogy in early childhood education and care by studying current perspectives and practical experiences of early childhood drawing teaching in different cultural contexts to help early childhood educators better support children's drawing activities. The research project is a collaboration with a private English-speaking kindergarten in Helsinki. They provided very important support in planning, execution, survey data, and feedback.

This thesis theoretically introduces the development of children's drawing at different ages and discusses the influence of the guiding concept of drawing in different cultures of Finland and China. It describes the current situation of children's drawing pedagogy by reviewing the literature. Some ideas and thoughts on children's drawing pedagogy with early childhood educators are shared and discussed through the survey and their valuable teaching experience through children's drawings is introduced and analyzed as well. A guideline for developing supportive drawing activities for young children is developed by summarizing and analyzing theory, discussing results and empirical methods. Valuable feedback and evaluations on the usability of the guide were collected from early childhood educators.

This guide helps early childhood educators understand the importance of guidance in early childhood drawing and teaching methods for children of different ages and provides self-assessment templates and recommended reference books for teaching activities. This guide has a very practical reference value. This thesis provides ways to increase the confidence of early childhood educators in teaching young children to draw.

Keywords: drawing, pedagogy, culture influence, early childhood education

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 The background

Drawing, as a visual expression among diverse forms of expression, is a very important learning area for young children in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) (Finnish National Agency for Education [FNAE] 2018, 46). There are many studies on children's drawing, mainly on how to understand children's drawing. The researchers have used children's drawings for example as a tool to measure cognition and personality, as well as emotional and communicative support (Malchiodi 1998), and clinically as an associative tool for assessing and capturing traumatic memories (Burgess & Hartman 1993). However, it has not been studied much how to support ECEC educators to systematically guide young children to develop their drawing.

Milbrath and Trautner (2008), Jolley (2009) and Overby (1991) all believe that children's drawings have important relations with cultural background and age. Our attitudes towards children's art are shaped by our cultural beliefs. These cultural beliefs, in turn, influence the kinds of experiences we offer our children at home and in kindergarten. (Huntsinger, Jose, Krieg & Luo 2011, 134.) Due to the influence of Eastern and Western cultures, early childhood educators have historically differed greatly in how to instruct children to draw. However, the author found that the ideas and concepts of Eastern and Western cultures in the guidance of children's painting are gradually changing due to the influence of the times and the frequent international cultural exchanges through literature review and investigation.

This research was strongly supported by the working partner, a private English-speaking kindergarten in Helsinki. The educators from the working partner think this is a very practical and interesting topic. They hope the research results will inspire them and support their work. The educators from the working partner actively participated in co-planning the theme, cooperating with surveys, and giving feedback.

### 1.2 The thesis aim

In Finland, based on the author's practical observations and discussions with Finnish ECEC educators, it seems like drawing is often unsupervised activity and time filler. There are still many early childhood educators who are influenced by traditional ideas or limited by artistic skills and experience, they rarely interact with children in children's drawing activities, and just let children draw freely. It can be deduced that in this kind of situation, the children

might have fewer opportunities to draw in kindergarten because some children may not have the consciousness to take the initiative to draw at all. Regularly organized drawing activities for young children allow each child to have opportunities to be exposed to artistic activities. This requires teachers to plan and give more strategic support and guidance to children's drawings.

The purpose of this thesis is to develop a pedagogical guide for early childhood drawing by discussing current perspectives and practical experiences of ECEC drawing pedagogy in various cultural contexts. It aims to help early childhood educators better support children's drawing activities so that children can get a better experience in drawing. This practical guide intends to assist early childhood educators to understand the significance of instruction in early childhood drawing, as well as instruction methods for children of different ages, and provides self-assessment templates for instructional activities and recommended reference books. As a whole, the thesis provides ways to increase early childhood educators' confidence in drawing instruction for young children.

This thesis theoretically introduces the development of children's drawing at different ages and discusses the influence of the guiding concept of drawing in different cultures of Finland and China. It describes the current situation of children's drawing pedagogy by reviewing the literature. Some ideas and thoughts on children's drawing pedagogy with early childhood educators are shared and discussed through the survey and their valuable teaching experience through children's drawings is introduced and analyzed as well. A guideline for developing supportive drawing activities for young children is developed by summarizing and analyzing theory, discussing results and empirical methods. Feedback and evaluations on the usability of the guide were collected from early childhood educators. Finally, the guide is presented in appendix 3.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Children's drawing development in different ages

Drawing, in simple terms, is the use of lines to draw patterns, shapes and images. It usually involves making marks on paper using some kind of drawing tool, other carriers and materials. Children's drawing consists of a process (art creation) and a product (finished artistic expression). Many professionals who want to help and understand children tend to focus most of their attention on the latter. (Malchiodi 1998, 26.) However, the author believes that in order to truly begin to understand the meaning of children's drawing in early education, it is necessary to have a thorough understanding of the process of drawing and the developmental performance of children of different ages.

For all children, drawing is a natural process (Kavanagh 1998, 3). Kellogg (1967) collected and analyzed at least 500,000 drawings and finally published 8,000 drawings in her book. She summed up the general laws of children's drawing development. Children have different drawing performances at different ages. The following research in this area is based on her research. The general characteristics of each developmental stage of children's drawing will be introduced here. It's important to note that these aren't set in stone because young children develop at their own speed (Mcilroy 2020). Four stages are identified by Luquet and Costall (2001): Involuntary drawing is the first stage, in which the child does not yet realize that the line he is drawing can be used to represent an object. The second stage is the unexpected realization that he can use his hitherto random tokens to represent something. He has gone from graffiti to purposeful creation. The third stage is the realism stage, which is the pinnacle of children's graphic development. At this age, drawing is among the most significant manifestations of children's psychological activities. The child has crossed the bridge into adulthood and is progressively succumbing to adult aesthetics in the fourth stage. The attempt at perspective is the most visible indication.

Babies under one year of age respond to visual stimuli such as pictures and colors. But they are not able to draw and just send crayons to their mouths (Kavanagh 1998, 6).

One year old: the uncontrolled graffiti stage. Babies at this stage like to scribble and doodle. The drawings are not representing anything. It is just a way for them to explore the world and the process of developing their motor coordination. They watch the crayons move, leaving marks on the surface so that they are able to discover the causal relationship between the act of drawing and the presentation on paper. They feel their ability to make things happen. Children of this age draw a variety of lines, both horizontal vertical and zig-zag. (Kavanagh 1998, 6, Mcilroy 2020.)

Two years old: the controlled graffiti stage. At this age, young children begin to discover the connection between the movements they make and the marks formed on the paper. They will start repeating the movements purposefully. They would doodle back and forth or draw some dots. Some children are able to draw closed curves and spirals. (Lin 2014, 9, Mcilroy 2020.)

It can be seen that before the age of three, children's paper drawing activities are an extension of physical activities. Children's drawings are visible and enduring records of those fleeting movements. So, their attention is more on the way of expression than on the content. Doodling is a process in which children enjoy rhythmic paper movement that is personal and non-communicative. (Baghban 1992, 15-16.)

Three years old: Basic shape stage. At this age, children will draw some complete shapes, although the lines are still not smooth and the shapes are irregular including circles, squares and crosses. The circle becomes dominant. Children can imagine an object in a randomly

drawn circle. (Kavanagh 1998, 6). They even start to try to draw people with these graphics. They are able to tell you what their doodles represent, even though you may not see what they describe. They only get the inspiration to name their drawings after they were done. They don't make plans before drawing. The colors they use can be out of touch with reality, and often they prefer to use just one color. (Mcilroy 2020.) It's important to note that 3-year-olds are on the threshold of graphical representation but are already very advanced in language development (Baghban 1992, 25). They might be able to call a certain shape's name, but not draw it well.

Four years old: the shape combination stage. Children at this stage begin to combine two or more shapes or forms to form a basic image. Children of this age are able to draw squares and rectangles, try to draw diamonds and triangles, and may not succeed. They will add details to the face, such as the eyes. They deliberately try to combine shapes and lines, and their drawings start to look like the images they describe. Children usually decide what to draw before they start. Drawing has more meaning and intent. (Mcilroy 2020.)

Five years old: the pictures stage. 5-year-old children are starting to show a lot of creativity in their drawings. Children draw spontaneously and begin to show their own backgrounds, interests, and experiences in their drawings. Their representations of people, animals and houses are constantly changing. They can color within the lines, but their use of color may still be impractical. Children at this stage have limited spatial perception, and people and objects may float abruptly in the air. They often draw themselves into pictures. (Mcilroy 2020.)

Six years old: having own style stage. Children have their own style of drawing by the age of six, and their interests and experiences are fully reflected in the artwork. They will be able to draw nice circles, squares, rectangles, triangles and diamonds in his drawings. They would draw different family members with size, hair and clothes. They have a good understanding of depth and distance and will draw people or animals through baselines, such as grass or water. The use of their colors becomes realistic. (Mcilroy 2020.)

It's worth noting that children aged 1-6 don't distinguish between actual reality and their perception of reality. They draw their mental impressions of objects, not their visual observations of them. Their drawings are representations, not reproductions. The drawings are full of emotional and imaginative elements. (Baghban 1992, 30.) Drawing in this stage of children was expressionist and subjective (Kavanagh 1998, 6).

At age 7-9, it is the symbolic period of the statement. Children like to express and draw repeatedly for the things they like, and they have been relatively complete in terms of image characteristics. Their understanding of "proportion" has made great progress; however, the sense of space is still insufficient. They gradually realized the presence of the drawing skills



and began to perceive the "imperfection" of their own work. They like to use bright and rich colors at this stage. Children's drawings of this age group will have a relatively complete story with the development of language ability and emotion, and the content of the whole drawing is like a statement of one thing or a plot. At the same time, they love to attach a simple text description to the drawing. (Lin 2014, 9.)

## 2.2 The benefits of drawing

Drawing is considered one of the most important ways for children to express themselves and is closely linked to the expression of personality and emotions. Children's drawings are believed to reflect their inner world, depicting various feelings and information about mental states and interpersonal patterns (Malchiodi 1998, 1). Drawing can help children deal with strong emotions that may be too complex to express in words. In the process of drawing, they vent or release emotions that words cannot resolve, which is very beneficial to their physical and mental health. At the same time, they also gained a sense of control in the drawing process, which strengthened their identity as active agents. Drawing creation has a significant decompression effect on children. Drawing can therefore be used as a means of supporting a child's adaptation to the environment. (Probine 2020.) Drawing provides children with an effective and creative way of communicating to help the professionals who work with them, whether in a clinical setting, hospital, shelter or school (Malchiodi 1998, 234).

Drawing allows children to enter an imaginative world, be creative and have fun thinking. Nurturing children's imagination helps develop empathy for others. Creativity is the ability to develop valuable unique ideas and solutions. The beauty of drawing as a form of visual art is that there is never one right answer. Drawings offer multiple solutions to problems or ways of expressing ideas. (Probine 2020.) During the drawing process, children learn planning skills, creative problem-solving, and knowledge of the various structures, materials, and techniques involved in the creative activity (FNAE 2018, 46). When children have the opportunity to observe and appreciate each other's drawings, and to talk about the ideas they explore through art, they can develop an understanding of different perspectives and realize that opinions and ideas are subjective and that there is no one "truth" or right answer. The strong cultural attributes of drawing can be the main means for young children to share their cultural identity and related values. (Probine 2020). Drawing is an important medium and method for them to explore the world, learn about different cultures, interact with others, express their emotions and think morally (FNAE 2018, 46).

Drawing supports children's learning. It develops children's fine motor skills, including the development of hand-eye coordination. It encourages children to express creatively and serves as a foundation for developing written thinking. Since drawing has a wide range of expressive characteristics, it can be easily combined with any subject, such as environmental

education, mathematical thinking, safety and health education, etc. Knowledge can be presented in the form of drawings to enhance children's understanding. Drawing is a child's tool for constructive learning. In a drawing environment, children's act of visually expressing their thoughts enables them to share their ideas with others. This supports them in transforming their understanding through co-construction. That is, children can try out new ideas and strategies inspired by their peers, which they internalize and then use in different contexts. In this way, drawing supports children as they develop their cognitive abilities. (Probine 2020.)

### 2.3 Cultural influences on drawing

Culture affects many aspects of children's drawing. The speed of development, the graphic elements, the subject and context of the drawing, the need to develop expressive skills, the teaching strategies of educators, and the expectations of educators and parents are all influenced by culture (Huntsinger et al. 2011, 134). Drawing is a visual language, just like spoken, written and sign language, which can be expressed very differently depending on the cultural background. Different worldviews and aesthetic preferences are displayed in their drawings. (Nguyen 2021, 14). The author discovered from literature and in practice that Finland and China have historically had different views on how to teach children to draw. However, some educators' perspectives from both countries are gradually changing with cultural exchanges, changing times, and constant reflection by educators.

#### 2.3.1 Perspectives from Finland

In Western culture including Finnish culture, many teachers are reluctant to intervene in the process of children's learning to draw in a direct way and are strongly influenced by Kellogg's ideology, for them, the intervention is considered to interfere with children's creativity. Rhoda Kellogg is a nursery expert and psychologist. She analyzed a lot of children's drawings and believed that children have a natural law of development in painting without intervention (Kellogg 1979). This view of artistic growth stems from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who believed that children are endowed with innate creativity and the law of art development and they can sustain the creativity of children's art into adulthood if allowed to relax at their own pace and in a natural way (Wilson 1985, 90).

Eisner (1972) called this ideology into question. He believes that the growth of children's art is impacted by others, such as interaction, experience, direction, and so on, rather than being the consequence of natural maturity. The child's artistic development ability is reflected in these influences. Learning to draw, according to Willats (2006), is similar to learning a language. Children need to master some rules and skills to use these limited skills with unlimited freedom. He disputed the belief that learning drawing skills affects children's creativity. Golomb (2002) came to the conclusion that contemporary Western culture may

ignore or sacrifice professional guidance in favor of the spontaneity, expressiveness and creativity of children's art.

Finnish training for early childhood educators focuses on theoretical and conceptual understanding of the entity of education, instruction and care (FNAE 2016, 26) rather than technical training. The authors believe this is mainly because the ECEC curriculum in Finland uses a broad model without specific teaching objectives for children development. Instructions on art are not directly seen in Finnish early childhood national core curriculums, but it is ubiquitous. It is closely related to everything in the learning area such as language enrichment, diversity of expression, me and my community, exploration and interaction with the environment, I grow and develop. It is also reflected in the transversal competencies, like learning and thinking, cultural ability, interaction and expression and so on. (FNAE 2016.) The training of teachers also focuses on cultivating teachers to think about what is best for children and what children need most, instead of instructing teachers to learn how to teach singing, dancing and painting. Therefore, early childhood educators will not regard skill training as the focus of children's daily life in kindergarten. Similarly, in the field of drawing, skill is naturally not the first. Even if early educators recognize the need for instruction in drawing, it is by no means a technique-based instruction.

Nowadays, the concept of children's drawing guides in western culture is also quietly changing. Some literature on arts education agrees that adult intervention is not only useful but vital to children's artistic development (Bea 2004, 247). Some Finnish researchers state there are many crucial elements in early childhood art pedagogy. First of all, it provides the possibility for children to experience art. For example, the process of art creation is full of emotion, and the completion of the work will bring the joy of success. Secondly, it provides the possibility for young children to take action in the field of art, such as invention, creation, imitation, and practice. The third goal is to enable children to engage in multi-functional and diverse kinds of interaction, such as multidisciplinary integration and multi-directional communication. Fourth, to provide young children with the possibility to learn knowledge, skills and attitudes towards art and to create it. (Juvonen & Ruismäki 2005, 4.)

Repo et al. (2019, 14) pointed out in the ECEC Curriculum Implementation evaluation that arts education is insufficient in the daily activities of ECEC in Finland. According to the assessment, visual arts education like guidance drawing activities is not part of ECEC's day-to-day work. Their implementation in some ECEC centers and family daycare groups is sporadic. One-third of ECEC center staff reported that visual arts education was offered monthly or less. The assessment also pointed to the need for educators to implement systematic and directed artistic expression. According to respondents, on-the-job training supports staff competencies in a decisive way (Repo et al. 2019, 20). They are in great need of relevant vocational training in this area.

### 2.3.2 Perspectives from China

Researchers have shown that Chinese children's drawings express more maturity, better fine motor skills, and more time to practice fine motor skills than western children (Huntsinger et al. 2011, 136). The fine motor development of Chinese children is relatively early, for example, they learn to eat with chopsticks very early. Learning to hold a pen is no longer difficult. The relatively calm disposition of Chinese infants makes it easier for them to focus on mindfulness practice earlier (Huntsinger et al. 2011, 143). The most important point is that adults invest more instruction in children's drawing in China. Evidence suggests that Chinese children have remarkable achievements in drawing (Winner 1989). Although these achievements are achieved through strong instruction and authoritarian teaching styles that would be disconcerting in the European tradition of early childhood education (Anning 1997, 227).

Chinese society emphasizes hard work and skill training over talent. This view is reflected in all aspects, including the field of art. The Chinese have always believed that if taught well, everyone can master drawing and painting. Their perspectives provide all children with a greater chance of reaching ability levels. (Huntsinger et al. 2011, 144.) Therefore, drawing skill instruction and intensive training have always been highly praised by educators and parents in China.

According to the author's observation and understanding, Chinese is a hieroglyph, and its origin is a kind of graphic symbol like an image. Chinese children learn Chinese by imitating and training stroke by stroke. Chinese also is a language with separate sounds and shapes. As a result, Chinese people need to practice writing repeatedly while knowing how to pronounce a word in order to link the sound and form of the word together. Throughout their basic education, Chinese children are given a variety of writing exercises, including writing, practicing calligraphy, and copying texts. It is clear that every Chinese has developed his own handwriting and writing style. Therefore, the Chinese subconsciously think that the process of learning to draw is the same. Beginning with imitation and training, children can draw in their own style after mastering the basic skills.

The training, interview and assessment of early Chinese educators put skills first. They believe that skill is the most objective and intuitive system to be evaluated. But this kind of training and education is actually only suitable for science and engineering positions, not for service-type positions. Service-type jobs should be people-oriented. (Zhiwu 2008.) According to the author's observation and understanding, early education in China is not a relationship between caregivers and clients, but a relationship between teachers and students. Teachers' job is to train good students who will know all kinds of skills in kindergarten. This has led early childhood educators to prioritize skills when caring for young children including drawing

instruction. China's early education curriculum is divided into five areas: health, language, society, science, and art. The content of each field penetrates each other. It guides how to promote the development of children's emotions, attitudes, abilities, knowledge and skills from different perspectives. (MEPRC 2012.) The school-based curriculum was adopted by the Chinese ECEC curriculum and designed to prepare for children entry into elementary school (Yang & Li 2019, 53).

In China, the traditional guidance model in which early childhood educators have long focused too much on skills is obviously insufficient in cultivating children's creativity and expression. The drawing instruction process is not based on young children's interests, nor does it fully follow the child's personality and age characteristics. Early childhood educators and parents alike focus too much on the outcome of drawing rather than the child's experience in the process. (Jiao 2018, 260.) The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (MEPRC 2012) realized that the status quo urgently needed to change, so it released 'The guide to 3-6 years old children's learning and development', in which it clarified that the art guidance in ECEC is mainly based on children's interests. It emphasizes creativity and expression, complying with the law of children's development.

## 2.4 Drawing pedagogy

### 2.4.1 Why need to guide children's drawing

Children have the right to express themselves, their views and ideas. Children have the right to be understood in every way they are able to communicate. Children have the right to appropriate guidance, care and encouraging feedback. (FNAE 2018, 21.) Every child has the right to be exposed to the artistic creation of painting and drawing in ECEC. Organized events ensure this is achieved. The social interaction theory of Vygotsky and Cole (1978) provides a lens through which to examine the dynamic relationships between adults and children. The results proved that when educators and researchers provided guidance to children, children performed better and they participated more actively. Children are willing to co-build ideas and make art with adults in a collaborative atmosphere (McArdle & Piscitelli 2002, 6).

Drawing is a symbolic system prior to developing writing. Children learning to draw benefit more from being coached on drawing activities by more experienced adults, much as children learning languages need language models and social engagement with partners. (Huntsinger et al., 2011.) According to Thompson (2013), emerging evidence demonstrates that adult assistance and scaffolding have a favorable impact on early children's art learning. Social experience and direct instruction can facilitate drawing in young children. Art educator Gelineau (2011) believes that people believe in fostering creativity by providing children with knowledge, skills, and an appropriate environment. Specifically, parents and teachers can

help children develop sensory observation skills, use their imaginations, see ordinary things in unusual ways, and provide an atmosphere that values their children's ideas and efforts.

Drawing plays an important role in children's early years because drawing is a tool for children to communicate with the real world, and early childhood educators are facilitators in this process. Educators should integrate resources and experiences to give children ample opportunities to try different ways to satisfy their expressiveness and curiosity. A supportive learning environment helps develop each child's innate potential and contributes to the well-rounded development of their lives. Educators will be surprised to learn that instruction in drawing at an early age allows children to develop in many other areas. (Kumari 2020, 8-9.)

#### 2.4.2 The educators' support role

The quality of children's use of art to communicate their preschool and kindergarten art experience is largely dependent on the teacher's prior art experience and teaching concepts. (Danko-McGhee & Slutsky 2003). Educators play a key role in children's experience with the art of drawing. Because educators can create a drawing activity environment, decide which drawing materials are available, when and where, and which children are involved in what type of activity. Currently, educators' practices in the art of drawing and painting vary widely. Educators often have very different views on how drawing is taught in ECEC. This can make it difficult to understand what is the appropriate guide method and when. (Probine 2020.)

Some instructors advocate for a hands-off approach to teaching. They believe that adult intervention can negatively affect children's creativity. They consider their role as providing materials and a supportive environment, but children can do it themselves. Supporters of this strategy think that all children are born with the ability to be creative. However, creating in isolation without feedback, discussion, and interaction can hinder a child's drawing development. Children, on the other hand, are eager to share their thoughts and works and anticipate interaction and feedback. As a result, the social experience factor cannot be ignored. Educators must experience the drawing process alongside children in order to have a better understanding of their thinking, social interactions, surroundings, culture, and the impact of their contact with materials. (Probine 2020.)

Some early childhood educators, on the other hand, take a more adult-oriented approach. Educators organize and prepare activities for children, yet these activities are frequently based on works that are imitated. It's tough to distinguish one child's work apart from that of another. Teachers may feel "comfortable" participating in such activities because there are no surprises and they have control over the outcome. However, too many adult mentoring experiences can have a negative impact on children's artistic self-efficacy, and they may come to rely on teachers for direction. (Probine 2020.)

Teachers' laissez-faire or adult over-instruction style may be influenced by an individual's lack of confidence in the art of drawing as a result of their educational experience. This could be due to the educator's personal experience of being over-instructed, or a lack of faith in his or her own professional arts training expertise. Teachers may avoid arranging guided drawing sessions as a result of their poor experience, or they may feel anxious about incorporating drawing into their own teaching. (Probine 2020.)

In both approaches, the educator's guidance is either too little or too much. The point of view in this thesis is that educators adopt child-oriented drawing activities, but teachers provide the necessary support to build a drawing environment with children, support children to develop skills and confidence, develop learning platforms that use drawing as a tool, and keep children motivated and creative. (Probine 2020.)

#### 2.4.3 What should educators do

Pedagogy is the academic term for a set of teaching methods about what and how educators teach. It is a combination of theory and practice. It deals with perspectives, teaching performance, environment, policy, culture, etc. It is a set of instructional approaches and strategies that enable learning to occur and provide knowledge, skills, and attitudes. It reflects the relationship between teachers and students, as well as students and the learning environment during the interactive process. The notions of ECEC quality, curriculum, and teaching methods are all intertwined with pedagogy. (Wall, Litjens and Taguma 2015, 22.) Accordingly, the drawing pedagogy could provide early childhood educators with various methods, materials and environments to give children more opportunities to express, create, experience and interact in drawing under a framework of systematically refining the theory, policies, experiences, and cultures.

Nowadays, due to many early childhood educators lacking research evidence on the process of children's development of drawing ability and the impact of kindergarten culture and pedagogy on children's drawing ability development, early childhood educators are confused about how to teach children to draw (Anning 1997, 220). In practice, teaching young children to draw can improve their confidence and competence in drawing, but teachers need to be trained to understand the value of drawings for learning and the process by which children progress in drawing (Anning 1997, 237). Trying to identify how to educate without instruction, many ECEC educators blur the borders between freely developing and guided instruction, technical training and creativity (McArdle, 2001). Robinson (1982) in the United Kingdom called for a radical rethinking of art pedagogy and a greater understanding of teachers' roles in guaranteeing children's progress. Tasks are not just about making anything happen in the name of self-expression or creativity, nor is it imposing rigid structures or ideas and methods

on children. A difficult balance needs to be struck between freedom and authority (Anning 1997, 226).

The curriculum refers to a set of activities designed to provide an educational experience for one or more students. These activities are believed to have educational consequences. (Eisner 1972, 153.) Educators need to think about a few questions when planning their curriculum. What do children need? What are the activities based on? How do they effectively organize these experiences? How do they evaluate these experiences? In the creative activity of art forms, there is no single right answer (Eisner 1972, 156). This makes evaluation difficult. In art education, the creative process of children is actually more expressive than the result. Educators may try to think about how to evaluate the process of activities. Educators should also not view drawing activities as merely a collection of independent events that children work with. The artistic activity requires sufficient continuity so that qualities and skills, such as fine movement, concentration, and problem-solving, can be developed, refined, and internalized. (Eisner 1972, 159).

To conclude, educators need to have practical teaching knowledge about drawing. When thinking about what and how materials, topics, and help to offer children, educators need to have a deep understanding and practice on their own. Educators can acquire new knowledge, develop new skills, and increase their understanding of different art schools by participating in various relevant professional training or self-study through online media. Educators need self-reflection. Revisit teaching strategies and methods for continuous improvement through feedback from art conversations with children and discussions with teaching teams. Active participation in training and constant reflection builds educators' confidence in teaching children's drawing. (Probine 2020.) Professional development for teachers is necessary and should make them more confident in their dealings with young children and their artistic experiences in school. Teaching methods such as scaffolding and inquiry-based learning are critical to the professional development of teachers in arts education. Educators' learning exchanges during seminars and conferences can be an important medium for understanding children's arts pedagogy. (Twigg & Garvis 2010, 200.)

### 3 Functional Thesis

#### 3.1 Working life partner

The work partner is a private English-speaking kindergarten operating in Helsinki since 2011. They provide daycare and preschool services in several locations. My target group is the smallest unit where they have 14 children aged 3-6. The children are divided into two groups, a preschool group of six children and a mixed group of eight 3-5 years old children. There are



three adults, one is a kindergarten teacher, one is a nurse, and one is a manager in the unit. The manager responsible for the management of the three units will come over from time to time to deal with some management matters. The kindergarten teacher is the primary contact for the thesis process. The project has received strong support from the partner kindergarten from initial planning, and execution to evaluation. Extensive discussions with the educators of the partner kindergarten throughout the process drove the project forward. Timely feedback from working partners also refined the final research results.

The drawings of children in the thesis are mainly from the preschool group from the working partner. Educators regularly conduct crafting and coloring activities based on weekly themes. There are few guided drawing activities. Children can draw unsupervised in their free time, and drawing tools and materials are readily available. But this is only for interested children to try it out on their own. The more active boys seldom draw by themselves because they are more focused on other dynamic activities or games in their free time. Due to the long-term lack of exposure to drawing, it is difficult or limited for them to express their feelings and imagination through drawing.

The partners hope to improve this situation through the research results of the project. Give every child of different ages the opportunity to actively participate in guided, interactive drawing activities. Let each child express themselves better through drawing and develop together with other fields. Educators are willing to organize and plan children's drawing activities, but they want more information on how to instruct effectively and systematically. They would love to take part in this research, listen to ideas from different cultures, have an in-depth discussion of teachers' vocational training in children's drawing, teaching methods, educators' attitudes towards children's drawing with me, and share some ideas about children's drawing skills, participation, experience, creativity, multi-functional interaction and other factors together, and help me to find the most suitable teaching for children's drawing method. They are in great need of strategic support and guidance in teaching children to draw.

In addition, two professional early childhood drawing teachers from different institutions in China also participated in the project. One is a teacher from a large city who works in a children's drawing club, and the other is a public kindergarten teacher from a medium-sized city with an artistic background. They provided very important survey data and feedback on the research results, significant support and insights for the research content as well, which enriched the teaching concepts of different cultures.

### 3.2 Research method

This thesis adopts qualitative research with a combination of observation, work collections and surveys. In qualitative research, researchers typically use mixed data collection methods,

such as utilizing a combination of observations, surveys, and interviews, or employ comparative studies, such as interviewing and asking the same questions to different subjects. The purpose of this is mainly to improve the accuracy of the data collected. This is called triangulation, which is collecting data through different means in the hope of getting a fusion of the truth. Because in qualitative research, often the effort to verify the validity of the data goes beyond collecting the data itself. Triangulation increases the researcher's confidence in the interpretation of all data. (Sawyer & Goldstein 2019, 33.)

My initial idea was to interview specific groups of people to obtain important information for the study, letting respondents answer eight open-ended questions in order, and analyzing the interview results. However, due to time and space constraints, the respondents decided to provide research data through online questionnaires with the same questions. According to their own situation, they can answer me in text, or they can answer me by voice.

Therefore, the research data sources come from surveys with questionnaires of two Finnish early childhood educators from the working partner and two Chinese early childhood educators, and some drawing works photos of young children from the working partner in Finland and educators in China. Some works may come from the author's drawing activities with children in the workplace. The observation from activities will be added to the analysis and discussion. Feedback of research results is still obtained with the same method, but with five open-ended questions instead.

### 3.3 Ethical Considerations

Before the start of the research project, it is necessary to fully consider the relevant ethical issues that may arise, and maintain sensitivity in the implementation process, strictly follow Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland (RCR) Guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (2012) and professional ethics regulations (Laurea 2022). All views and research from predecessors in the thesis are properly cited.

The thesis project participants are the manager and two teachers from the partner kindergarten and two early childhood drawing teachers from China. The purpose of the thesis, the theoretical framework, the actions to be taken, the cooperation needed and possible research outcomes were discussed with all participants. After obtaining the manager's signature on the thesis project agreement and research permission from the parents (Appendix 2), the author sent the questionnaire to the teachers and collected their feedback and evaluation of the research results. All participants participated anonymously and the thesis doesn't involve any personal information. The name of the working partner unit does not appear in the thesis, instead of 'a private kindergarten'.

Children's drawings, like any other creative work, involve issues of ownership, storage, choice, privacy, and the security of the creative environment (Malchiodi 1998, 219). The electronic versions of children's drawings quoted in the thesis have been approved by the teachers, children and parents. The original is still in the custody of the child. No child's name or other easily revealing personal privacy appears in the picture.

Most children are proud of their work. It is a very positive experience for them when they are seeing their work displayed in a place where others can appreciate it. This is an effective way to support and strengthen children's sense of identity and self-confidence. However, sometimes when children know that their work will be displayed publicly in a certain way, they may change their drawing style to cater to the popular aesthetic rather than express it freely. Therefore, it should be avoided as much as possible to inform children that their work will be published before organizing the drawing activities. The best way to do this is to create a safe and relaxing environment for the children to create. After the work is completed, the children are consulted on whether their work can be made public. (Malchiodi 1998, 223.)

In addition to a comfortable physical environment, a child's safe, relaxing creative environment includes interaction, responsiveness, encouragement, and appreciation from the professionals who work with the child. The educators should not dispose of children's work indiscriminately and they should maintain understanding and respect for the children's work at all times. (Malchiodi 1998, 229-234.)

The evaluation involved in the thesis is always only the evaluation of the drawing teaching method and does not involve the evaluation of children's drawing. The thesis only illustrates some points or ideas by understanding children's drawings, and the author always maintains sensitivity to ethical issues in this process.

## 4 Implementation

### 4.1 Surveying

The research data for this project comes from two sources, one is a questionnaire survey in the form of open questions, and the other is children's works. The questionnaire survey does not involve quantitative data analysis, and only uses a series of eight questions about teachers' teaching attitudes, methods, and evaluation indicators to explore teachers' views on drawing teaching methods in different cultures. The questionnaires were distributed to two ECEC educators from workplace partners in Finland through google form and sent to a teacher who specialized in drawing and painting for children in a large city in China and a teacher in a public kindergarten in a medium city through word file transmission. Respondents in Finland filled out the open-ended questions in the form online. Respondents in China answered the

questions with a digital communication application WeChat (voice recordings), and also explained relevant answers by text. They also transmit some of the children's works by WeChat after obtaining the permission of their guardians. They explained the background of the works in texts or voice recordings. The author also collected some works in the drawing activities with children in Finland and published them in the thesis with the consent of the guardians and children.

The pre-investigation assumptions were mainly derived from the literature review. The research direction is closer to practice because of the responses from the workplace partner and early childhood educators from cities of different scales in China. The author simultaneously notices the efforts of early childhood educators in different cultures in order to better help children to draw. The opinions of employees are important and valuable, but they are not the only determinants of planning the pedagogy guide, because the feelings of the key target which is children cannot be ignored. Questionnaire results remain anonymous at all times, and a copy of the questionnaire is attached in Appendix 1. The survey is a very meaningful step. Only by fully understanding the real and profound thoughts of the workers in the front line of early childhood education can we better explore methods suitable for children's drawing pedagogy. Their constructive answers also gave me a lot of inspiration to write a children's drawing pedagogy guide.

#### 4.2 Survey results

In studying the children's drawing pedagogy, we first need to understand how educators view children's drawing. When asked what factors are important to children's drawing, these early childhood educators gave their own opinions. Both Finnish and Chinese respondents mentioned access to resources, including time, support (this is balancing guided instruction and independent drawing opportunities), and a variety of materials in order to experiment with different formats. What they emphasize most is the freedom of children in the drawing. A Chinese interviewee mentioned the aesthetic environment. She believes that ECEC educators need to help children have a pair of eyes that discover the beauty and can appreciate and observe various beautiful art forms in life everywhere, such as branches with clear lines, blue sky dotted with white clouds, and flowing streams. Respondents summarized several major factors, including the accessibility of children's drawing which is various supports such as materials, time, and environment, and children's degrees of freedom which are originality, creativity, and flexibility in the drawing. In addition, the author believes that children's artistic experience in drawing is also very important, including self-expression, the joy of success, satisfaction, and interactivity.

Respondents affirmed the need to give children proper guidance when drawing to help them express themselves better. In particular, respondents from China felt that guidance was

important. Appropriate guidance can help children overcome the feeling of difficulty, but it cannot deprive young children of their original expression. Guidance needs to be based on children's interests, and the goal is to help children develop imagination and expressiveness. They believe that interest, basic skills, and imagination are all indispensable. Although the teachers from Finland think that appropriate support such as giving sufficient space, encouraging interaction, and demonstrating guidance can help some children who are not very good at drawing. However, for those children with a passion for drawing and talent, the educator is not sure what "appropriate instruction" is. Another Finnish interviewee even worried that the guidance would limit children's ability to develop their own artistic style. It can be seen that the Finnish respondents still had doubts and concerns about teachers' guidance, while the Chinese interviewees were quite sure that children's drawings needed guidance.

Respondents were consistent about systematic guidance and support for children of different ages. They all agreed that the age characteristics of children should be followed. Because children of different ages have different physical and psychological development, cognitive levels and abilities are also different. A respondent from Finland offered specific recommendations for guidance for different ages. The educator believes that young children (3-4 years old) need time to experiment and become familiar with the process of drawing, the materials, the concept of disappointment, etc. The educator also thinks that 5-6-year-old children can enjoy more formal instruction, step-by-step instructions, demonstrations, and more. Older children (preschool age and school-age) can enjoy more complex demonstrations or instruction, which in turn produce more technical or skill-based results. Another Finnish interviewee also insisted that children should explore art in areas of their ability to bear. An interviewee from China believes that every child has the potential to create drawings, but there are still some differences and independence among them. Educators need to teach students in accordance with their aptitude to help them better develop their drawing.

Respondents were open to learning about multicultural teaching methods. They believe that art is inherently borderless. Cultural differences will cause differences in the expression methods of drawing in different countries, for example, China pays more attention to ink painting, while the Western countries pay more attention to oil painting and sketching. However, it is worth learning about different cultural experiences, obtaining certain inspiration, and then combining the characteristics of children to construct suitable teaching methods. One of the interviewees from China mentioned that drawing is not only cultural but also contemporary. And times are always changing, educators need to keep a learning passion all the time. A respondent from Finland also felt that the creative process is only more rewarding to versatile creators.

When asked about the main ideas or core concepts that guide children to draw, respondents from Finland considered helping children to use their imaginations the most important. Especially to provide the necessary support to children who are passionate about drawings, such as helping to find inspiration, providing paper problem-solving tools and some necessary basic skills. Respondents from China agreed with this sentiment, they believe that imagination, creativity and expressiveness are important. Children can use drawing tools to develop a physical sense of touch and complete the transformation from thinking in the brain to visual presentation. Children are too young to draw very concrete things. Helping children release their natural, happy expression is the key concept, and some technical support is provided when necessary. The most important thing is that every one of their creations deserves to be praised. Teacher encouragement and praise are important in this process.

Respondents also had unique insights on how to assess whether drawing instruction is suitable for children and where it will be assessed. Respondents in Finland felt that balance is always important, too much freedom and no guidance can leave a child frustrated that they have ideas that do not translate to paper. On the opposite end of the spectrum, too much instruction can feel like rules that cannot be broken, this makes the process of making artwork not very fun, potentially demotivating. For different age groups and different personalities, the balance is different so the teacher needs the skills to not only teach but recognize when to push and when to give space. A Chinese interviewee believed that as long as the children can fully express what they want to express using the language of drawing, then the teacher's guidance in this process can be considered a success. Another interviewee in China added that the maintenance of children's interest and enthusiasm is also an important indicator of the success of teacher-led activities.

In terms of teacher guidance, respondents agreed with guidance on interdisciplinary guidance, the introduction of natural or everyday materials, and the setting of scenes or themes that are close to children's lives. And they have been experimenting with these methods in their teaching. Finnish respondents felt that setting themes close to their children's lives could easily capture children's interests and believed it's a great way for children to learn about and explore the world around them. Respondents in China believe that the use of materials is very important, it is not necessary always to hold a pen to draw, we can use any drawing tool. The creation of art can be very diverse, and art can be easily combined with teaching in other disciplines.

When discussing how educators should balance instruction and children's freedom in children's drawing, all respondents agreed that children's initiative is important. Finnish respondents believed that the primary responsibility of educators was to be aware of the frustrations that some children show and their root causes. If children express frustration due to technological limitations, then educators need to give more technical guidance. If they feel like they can't

express themselves, it may be that they need a different routine or more choices on the subject. So each child is actually guided differently. It is important that every child can feel the joy of the creative process of drawing. A Finnish interviewee emphasized a clear timetable and instructions to balance the two will be needed. The Chinese respondents believed that children's drawing definitely needs the guidance of teachers, but this kind of guidance is mainly about the way of thinking, knowledge expansion, and ideas and creativity. Under this kind of guidance, the children still have a lot of room to play freely. The technical guidance is mainly to make the children draw more figurative things. However, in early childhood, they don't need to draw pictures that are very similar to real life. Some very basic technical guidance is more to help eliminate children's fears of difficulty.

### 4.3 Children's works

These collections of drawings are all from the children's works in the interviewee's activities and work partner. All works are collected with the permission of the children's guardian. A copy of the permission is attached in Appendix 2. The methods adopted by the educators in practical teaching are reflected in the works. From the effect of the works, the children fully expressed themselves and showed their extraordinary imagination.

#### ➤ Topics or Backgrounds

Encouraging children to give full play to their imaginations in their work has always been the focus of early childhood educators' development activities. Usually, educators will choose topics or backgrounds that children are interested in as a guide and let them draw their own works through the extension of topics and opening their minds. The creative drawing of the shadow is shown in Figure 1, which is a very interesting outdoor activity. On a sunny day, the teacher asked the children to record the silhouettes of tree branches or leaves reflected on paper. Then let the children imagine what this shadow looks like, which can be created by adding details. The boys drew all kinds of monsters, and the girls drew cute animals.



Figure 1: Creative drawing of the shadow (6-7 years old)

Children love candy the most, and they'll be more than happy if you let them design their favorite candy jar. It's true, they draw all sorts of pretty candy jars (Figure 2). Once children's interest is captured, their imagination will fly. Overby (1991, 245) agreed that 'when a group of kids is focused on expression, it's easier for the imagination to gain wings.'



Figure 2: Design candy jars (4-5 years old)

➤ Stories or Cartoons

Importing through stories or cartoons is also a great way to do it. Children are drawn to the storyline and have a sense of the picture in their minds. For example, in ants move watermelons (Figure 3), educators first read the picture book of ants moving watermelons to



the children and then asked the children to imagine the scene where the ants finally moved the watermelons to their homes and draw it down. In this work, the watermelon part is red paper torn off and pasted on by hand. For young children, tearing stickers by hand is also a good way to draw.



Figure 3: Ants move watermelon (4-5 years old)

Howl's Moving Castle is a favorite cartoon for kids. Children are obsessed with magical castles in cartoons. Educators let children design their own castles and become the little masters of the castle. In the works of Moving Castles (Figure 4), each castle is so special and unique. In those works, the teacher introduced the basic structure of the castle and used leading questions, such as if it needs to be moved, what does it need? If the castle has more than one floor, what is needed inside to be able to go up and down? When in a castle and wondering what's going on outside, what do you need? Children developed their imagination step by step in this structured guide question and finally completed the work.

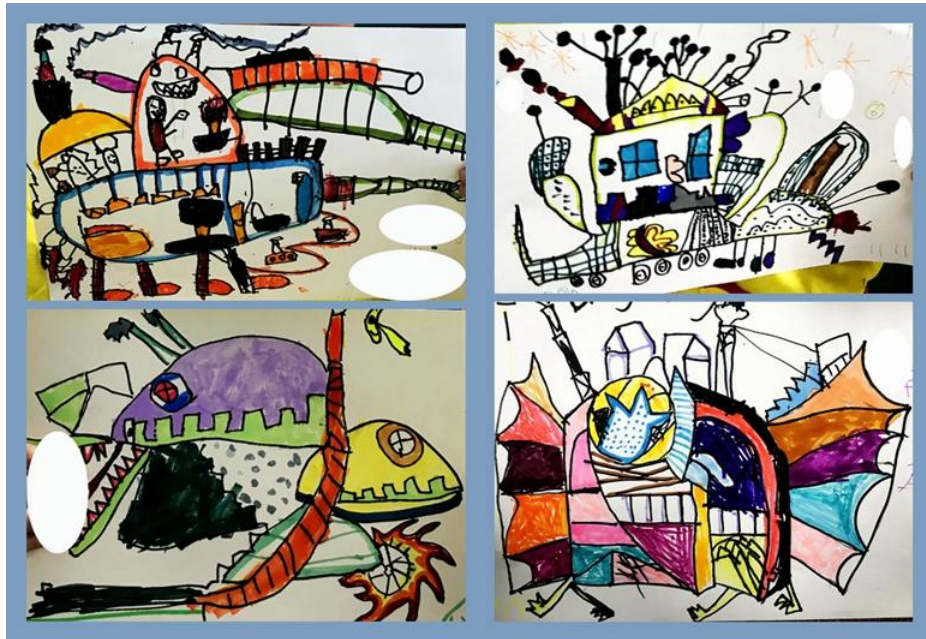


Figure 4: The moving castle (6-7 years old)

➤ Different materials and Masters' ideas

Experimenting with different materials and borrowing ideas from other painting masters allows children to experience the diversity and beauty of artistic creation. Marble rolling painting (Figure 5) draws on the painting techniques of the master painter Jackson Pollock. The teacher asked the children to control the rolling of the marble balls in the box to make them produce different motion trajectories. The different trajectories and lines produced by the marble balls of different colors are intertwined, and finally various abstract paintings are made.



Figure 5: The marble rolling painting (3-4 years old)

➤ Interdisciplinary

This method is often used for children three to four years old or younger. When their pen control ability is not very strong, other tools or materials can be introduced, such as the marbles mentioned earlier. The important thing is that in the process of drawing, let the children have a sense of control, experience the fun, and have a preliminary understanding of how the movement trajectory is transformed into the presentation on paper. Vegetable texture painting (Figure 6) is the same method and combines art with the common sense of life, which is belonged to examples of interdisciplinary. Usually, children rarely observe the texture of vegetables after being cut. Children can use the cross-sections of various vegetables as paintbrushes, stain them with their favorite colors, print them on paper, and finally combine them into various vegetable texture paintings.



Figure 6: The vegetable texture painting (3-4 years old)

Small animals have always been a favorite topic for children to talk about. When winter came and the weather was cold, the teachers asked the children to design dens for their beloved animals (Figure 7). This is also an example of interdisciplinary. The teachers let the children understand the living habits of small animals. For example, the little hedgehog and the little bear need to hibernate in winter, but the little hedgehog needs to live in a burrow, and the little bear needs to live in a cave deep in the forest. So while learning this knowledge, the children also developed their imagination to design a warm home for the little animals.



Figure 7: Find a home for an animal (4-5 years old)

➤ Recall and Narrate

Memory drawing is a child's attempt to recall a person, object, environment, scene or plot through drawing. Drawing from memory is not particularly easy for all children (Malchiodi 1998, 20). But it's a great thing to teach children to use a paintbrush or colored pencil to record fond memories. Everyday life is a very accessible subject matter for children. Describing a complete plot on a piece of 2D paper requires children's strong logical thinking and plane composition skills. This is the cultivation of pre-writing thinking. Usually, children will combine reality and imagination, that is, their works come from a certain memory in reality, but have been processed by their imagination. Therefore, such works are more narrative. Drawing a complete plot by recalling or imagining it is not easy for young children. Usually, girls get into the field earlier than boys.

The upper left corner of Figure 8 is a child who has just attended a wedding. She felt the beauty of the wedding scene and imagined what her wedding would be like one day, so she made this drawing. Here she is presenting a wedding ring to the groom as the bride, and her brother as a cherub throwing petals on top of their heads. The top right is a picture of a girl and her friends going skiing. She was able to draw dynamics with oblique angles and illustrate the background with pieces of simple snowflakes. The composition is very good and the image is vivid. The bottom left is a picture of a girl playing with her friends in an amusement park. There are swings, sandboxes, and slides in the pictures. It started to clear up and then it rained, but they still had a great time. The bottom right of the picture is a girl playing with her family one day. They first went to the ice cream shop to buy their beloved ice cream, then went for a swim, and finally went for a picnic on the grass. She drew the full timeline. The happy emotions reflected in these pictures are easy to perceive.



Figure 8: Beautiful memories (6-7 years old)

#### 4.4 Developing a guidance for support

After collecting and summarizing a wealth of information, including literature, research surveys, and analysis of works, the author developed a drawing guide with children of different ages (Appendix 3) for educators. This guide is divided into stages by age and gives early childhood educators some supportive information on children's drawing from various aspects and perspectives such as children's participation, experience, creativity, multi-functional interaction, fine activity development, and drawing skills. The guide respects children's differences and uniqueness, with the ultimate goal of allowing children to benefit from a variety of supports. The guide also provides educators with an assessment of how better to support children's drawing and can be used as supportive material to enrich drawing development activities. The guide recommends some books at the end.

This guide is primarily for children 3-6 years old. Children aged 1-2 are mainly in the graffiti stage. They do not need too much intervention from adults. They only need to be given a certain opportunity to explore the world with the help of pens or other tools and feel the fun of sports on paper. Seven-year-old children start primary school and fall outside the ECEC age range. Therefore, this is a guide that integrated various viewpoints from front-line educators of different cultures, combines theory with practice, and provides some practical drawing pedagogy guides for children of different ages from 3 to 6 years old.

After introducing the meaning of children's drawing, this guide provides general guidance from several aspects. First, this guide emphasizes that educators should focus on the process of creative drawing, not the product in ECEC (Mcilroy 2020). The educator's main task is to

observe their progress and provide them with new ways of exploring. Second, feeling and appreciation are part of drawing creation. Educators need to help children learn to feel the beauty in life or in the works of masters. Third, educators need to create a supportive environment, including materials and tools, an atmosphere for free expression and communication, and the presentation of work. Fourth, educators work with children to design activity themes and backgrounds. Fifth, educators need to constantly observe, evaluate, and reflect to improve drawing activities. Sixth, what educators should do when children show frustration.

In the second part, the guide had a detailed description of the 3-6-year-old's drawing characteristics, fine motor characteristics, materials that educators need to provide, themes and contexts set, and some suggestions. This part is closely related to the characteristics of children's physical development and is very targeted and practical. The third part is the recommended series of books added later after getting feedback from some educators, which includes theoretical parts suitable for educators and parents, as well as picture books suitable for children to draw in their free time or activities.

The fourth part is a self-assessment template designed by the author. It is an evaluation form for educators to assess drawing activities. Assessment forms are used by educators to assess drawing activities, not children's work. The assessment form is personal and records each child's performance in the drawing. It examines whether the activity is suitable for the child and whether the child is effectively supported and developed in the activity. The evaluation form assesses activities from 9 aspects, the accessibility of children's drawing activities, including access to materials or tools, and integration of themes and contexts. The child's participation (interested, completed), experience (self-expression, joy of success, satisfaction, interactivity), the child's freedom (original, imagination, flexibility), multi-functional interaction (with daily The degree of connection in life, cognitive development, cultural manifestation, child's personality development, such as patience, attention, persistence, observation, overcoming setbacks), children's drawing style (color saturation, figurative, abstract, narrative, layered composition), fine motor (Proficient, need more practice), need more assistance (thinking guidance, drawing skills, physical display, demonstration drawing), other supplementary notes. References are attached at the end and can also be used as recommended books or articles.

## 5 Evaluation

This thesis mainly collects feedback from the working partner on the '3-6 years old children's drawing pedagogy guide' through five questions, and evaluation of all stages of the research process, from planning, execution, and feedback as well.

Five feedback questions on the '3-6 years old children's drawing pedagogy guide' as below,

1. Can you describe this guide in three words?
2. What parts of this guide do you find particularly useful?
3. Where do you think this guideline needs improvement?
4. Do you think this guideline will be useful in your future work? How likely are you to use it?
5. Does this guide exceed, meet, and fall short of your expectations?

The words they use to describe the guidelines are mostly 'detailed, maneuverable, practical, clear, supportive, adaptable, concise, efficient, informative, insightful and in line with children's age characteristics.' They unanimously believe that the drawing pedagogy for each age group is of particular instructive value. Some educators consider that the evaluation and breakdown by age group are nice. It serves as a useful reminder to focus on the child's strengths at a certain point and the process of creating and supporting that process. There are also some educators who think that the six aspects of the first part of the general guide and overview are also very clear and helpful.

In terms of improvement, educators also made valuable suggestions. Some educators suggested that some teaching books can be attached. The author added reference books for educators and parents to the final version according to the suggestions, as well as drawing books that children can use for drawing activities or free drawing practice. An educator also suggested that she would like to know some information that motivates and guide children with special needs to express themselves through drawing. Another respondent gave the same feedback, which he thought would be very useful for most children, but wondered if there might be some alternatives or advice for those who can't fit into the structure. The advice is great, just that it would be a big topic and need to be discussed separately instead of in a general guide. This guide is positioned as a primer and starting point for instructing children to draw. The authors hope that this general guide will serve as a reference for future drawing guides for children with special needs.

Educators agree that this guide will be used in future work. Educators find this guide useful to better systematically plan and organize drawing activities. There are also educators who think this guide is also suitable for parents to read. Educators believe that the greatest inspiration from this guide is that they need to continue to learn and reflect on their own educational activities. They think that this would be great for some workshops or beginning drawing groups, especially mixed age groups. All educators interviewed expressed satisfaction with the guide, believing that it met or even exceeded their expectations. Some educators consider that this easily meets expectations for those caretakers or teachers who may be unfamiliar with organizing drawing exercises. It serves as a starting point and can always evolve into something unexpected or more challenging along with the children's skills.

The working partner praised the research process, especially the design of the blending of cultural concepts from the two countries throughout the thesis. The theoretical part tells the history of the cultural drawing concepts of the two countries so that readers can be more inclusive and understanding. They find it very clear and easy to understand through children's works to explain teaching ideas and methods. Although there are not many interviewees, The valuable information is most important instead of the quantity for a qualitative thesis. The entire research process is interlinked, planning, execution and evaluation are very clear, logical and efficient. The partners said that the cooperation was very pleasant and they learned a lot from each other.

## 6 Discussion

For a long time, Finnish early childhood educators and Chinese early childhood educators seem to have different views on the appropriate teaching of early childhood drawing. In China, the development of basic abilities takes precedence, and it is considered that creativity will develop once children have mastered the basics. The prevailing view in Western society, including Finland, is that creative expression is best developed through a non-directive, progressive approach to education. It is believed that the instruction in early childhood weakens a child's natural creativity, while skills are more appropriate later in development. (Huntsinger et al. 2011, 134.)

It is undeniable that there are people of different races, civilizations, languages, classes and backgrounds in today's world, and they have their own understanding of beauty. But in children's drawings, children are the subject and creator of the drawing. Creation is not a simple imitation of an adult example by children, but a positive and active process in which children express their understanding and thinking about the external world through their own intuitive perception. Children's drawings express what they see, know and feel, rather than instilling or embodying adult thoughts. Since each child's understanding of the world is different, their drawing performance has different characteristics from others. So every drawing should be unique. While children are still growing, they are constantly changing individuals, and their drawings develop with their thinking and cognitive development. Children's drawings should be a combination of graphic images and their thinking expressions, otherwise the pictures will seem to have lost their souls and innocence. "Freedom" still reigns supreme when it comes to a kid's right to visual and artistic literacy (McArdle & Piscitelli 2002, 6).

Both cultures agree with Piaget that children's drawing is a window into a child's general cognitive abilities, not a specific area of development (Sawyer & Goldstein 2019, 33). That is to say, no one thought of defining a child as an artist when he was very young and starting to



cultivate him to be an artist now. Both the Chinese and Finnish views hold that children have the right to be exposed to artistic drawing at an early age, whether or not he is an artist later on. On this point, the two sides are in high agreement. In the past, the two sides disagreed on whether or how to guide children's drawing. But now, we can see from the literature, interview results, and children's works that the concepts of both sides tend to be close. That is to say, both parties believe that children's drawing, as one of the "language" tools for children to express their understanding of the world, is their own understanding, thoughts and wishes of the world, that is, the aesthetic emotional expression of the understanding of the objective world. Adults need to respect children's expressions and also should provide some help in some ways.

Jalongo (1999) acknowledges that the influence of early childhood educators' own values and experiences in relation to their own arts influences children's arts learning. Therefore, professional learning experiences must challenge existing negative beliefs and support the development of positive beliefs to integrate drawing into early childhood activities. Early childhood educators often have no formal training in arts education (Eisner, 1988), but they are encouraged to "integrate" arts into children's core developmental areas. Jalongo (1999) argues that teachers who do not have confidence in their own artistic abilities will have a negative impact on the arts of their students. Therefore, there is a need for arts-related training for teachers at all stages of their careers. Through continuous professional development, teachers will develop essential skills to help themselves manage young children's arts learning. (Twigg & Garvis 2010, 193-195.)

Most of the current research on children's drawing focuses on psychological tracking research under laboratory conditions, and there are few systematic studies on the process of creating meaning through graphics in the classroom setting (Anning 1997, 228). This thesis hopes to be a starting point for this research to let more people pay attention to the field of children's art and drawing activities and to give children more support and understanding. At the same time, educators can understand the value of drawing for learning and how children progress in drawing. More importantly, educators have enhanced their self-confidence and awareness of continuous reflection and learning in teaching drawing. If they understand the various schools of drawing in art and design, it will be easier to introduce children to and guide them to choose the most appropriate way of performing a particular task. If they are supported by a variety of teaching strategies, they will be sensitive to children's personal exploration of drawing styles and better support them in developing their own personal styles. (Anning 1997, 237.) To assist the long-term development of ECEC teachers' positive beliefs, values, and experiences, more study on children's drawing pedagogy in ECEC is required. (Twigg and Garvis, 201.)

According to the summary of this thesis, in order to guide children in drawing or other creative expression methods, it is first important to consider what motivates their spontaneous expression. Children typically access the images they draw in three ways: memory, imagination, and life (Malchiodi 1998, 20). The author hopes that this thesis can give educators a little inspiration so that children can swim more freely in the ocean of art drawing. When it comes to artistic drawing, children should be encouraged to actively explore, develop, and shape themselves. At the same time, with the support of adults, they are exposed to various painting drawing tools and materials, appreciate various painting and drawing works and natural beauty, and develop their abilities in other fields through the integration of drawing. (McArdle & Piscitelli 2002, 3.)

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### Appendix 1: Questionnaire about Drawing Pedagogy

This questionnaire was created to collect some early childhood educators' views on how to view and carry out early childhood drawing guidance in ECEC, in order to better help young children of different ages (3-6 years old) express themselves and meet their emotional needs.

The questionnaire is being developed in conjunction with my research for a thesis project for the Bachelor of Social Services at Laurea University of Applied Sciences. I welcome any feedback or new ideas you are able and willing to provide and am happy to share my own findings after completing this project.

No personal information is involved in this process, thank you for your cooperation on this.

Best regards

Xin Ouyang

1. What factors do you think are important for children's drawing?
2. Do you think that as an educator, giving children proper guidance and help in drawing can help them express themselves better through drawing?
3. Would this kind of guidance be better if it were systematic and step-by-step for children of different ages?
4. Are you willing to learn about the guidance methods of drawing from different cultures for young children?
5. What do you think are the main ideas or core concepts when guiding children to draw?
6. How do you evaluate the drawing guidance is appropriate for children? Which aspects are you going to evaluate from?
7. What are your thoughts on Interdisciplinary guidance, use of nature or daily materials, the setting of scenes or themes that are close to children's lives or their interests in drawing guidance?
8. When it comes to children drawing guidance, how do you balance guided instruction and children's free play?



## Appendix 2: A Copy of Research Permit Application

Your name Xin Ouyang

email address Xin.Ouyang@student.laurea.fi

Dear guardians,

I'm studying at Laurea University of Applied Sciences and will graduate as an early childhood education teacher this year.

I'm doing my bachelor's thesis about drawing pedagogy guide in ECEC--Perspectives from Finland and China. The purpose of my study is to help educators in different ages groups from the working partner to establish a pedagogy guide for children's drawing.

For my empirical study, I will collect some works photos from my drawing activities with children. Children's original works are still kept by children. The observation from activities will be added to the analysis and discussion. This does not cause any unexpected or harmful situations for children, and they can also decline from participating.

No names or other personal information will be collected or restored. The children's name will not appear in the collected children's work. These permits will be destroyed after the thesis has been evaluated by Laurea University of Applied Sciences.

The thesis will be published in Theseus ([www.theseus.fi](http://www.theseus.fi)) in June 2022.

The supervising teacher in Laurea is XXX.

Please fill out the following permit and return it to the educators in XXX by 18.3.2022.

You can decline the permit later even if you give permission now.

Thanks very much for cooperating.

15.3.2022

Sincerely,

Xin Ouyang

\*\*\*\*\*

**Consent to participate in the study [name of the study here]**

The child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ is allowed to participate the study

\_\_\_\_\_ is NOT allowed to participate the study.

\_\_\_\_\_ The child's drawings can be used as anonymous examples in the thesis.

\_\_\_\_\_ The child's drawings can NOT be used as anonymous examples in the thesis.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian's  
name \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian's signature  
\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 3: 3-6 years old children's drawing pedagogy guide

3-6 years old children's drawing pedagogy guide



Picture by Yue Ouyang

by Xin Ouyang

4.2022

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## **Introduction**

Every child has the right to be exposed to the artistic creation of painting and drawing in early childhood education. Organized events ensure this is achieved. During the activity, educators need to provide various resources, including materials, tools, etc., as well as various supports to help children better experience the drawing process. This guide integrates various viewpoints from front-line educators of different cultures, combines theory with practice, and provides some practical drawing pedagogy guides for children of different ages from 3 to 6 years old. It aims to provide some constructive support for early childhood educators organizing children's drawing activities.

## **The significance of drawing**

Drawing, as a visual expression among diverse forms of expression, is a very important learning area for young children in ECEC. During the creative process, children learn planning skills, creative problem solving, and knowledge of the various structures, materials, and techniques involved in creative activities. Drawing is an important medium and method for them to explore the world, understand different cultures, interact with others, express emotions, and ethical thinking (FNAE 2018, 46). Because of the wide range of expressive characteristics of drawing, it can be easily combined with any subject, such as environmental education, mathematical thinking, safety and health education, etc.. The knowledge can be presented in the form of drawing to enhance children's understanding. Drawing can help children deal with strong emotions that may be too complicated to express in words. During the process of drawing, they vent or release such emotions that cannot be resolved in words, which is very beneficial to their physical and mental health. At the same time, they also gain a sense of control in the drawing process, strengthening their identification as active agents.

## **How to guide children to draw**

It was important to focus on the process of creative drawing, not the product in ECEC (Mcilroy 2020). The main task of educators is to observe their progress and provide them with new ways of exploring. Facing children between the age of 3-6, teaching guidance is mainly to provide space, time, materials and tools, communication and encouragement. Avoid forcing children to change their drawing style or approach, and don't offer criticism or correction. Instead, encouragement, observation, and open-ended questions will help children create and imagine more details and possibilities. (Medford 2020.)

Feeling and appreciating are part of drawing creation. Educators let children get in touch with nature, feel and appreciate beautiful scenery, let them pay attention to its color, shape and other characteristics, and support children to collect objects that they think are beautiful, such as leaves and stones, and appreciate them together. Educators can also organize to take children to visit museums and art galleries to experience artworks of different eras and cultures. (MEPRC 2012). Educators create conditions for young children to be exposed to a variety of art forms and works. Educators can provide rich materials, such as books, photos, paintings, etc. so that children can appreciate and experience the style and beauty of other drawings.

Creating a supportive environment is a key guide for young children to draw. Educators need to provide a wealth of materials and tools that are easy for children to pick up and place to support children's independent drawing or other spontaneous artistic expression and creation. Encourage children to use recycled materials for aesthetic placement. In order for young children to be willing to express themselves through drawing, educators need to create an atmosphere that makes children feel psychologically comfortable. In the process of children's self-expression and creation, they do not intervene too much or impose their will on children, and only give specific help when children need it. (MEPRC 2012.) When listening to children's feelings and thoughts about drawing, educators need to respect them and guide them to express themselves with open-ended questions. Children may be inspired to add more detail in drawing when answering these questions. When educators respond to children, do not judge the work, but describe the process of observation, such as "You draw a lot of circles, some small and some big." "I see this sun, and you use yellow. "The rainbow you drew reminds me of my Skittles." Children's artistic creations may be displayed with the children's consent. Instead of complimenting each drawing, show it. It's important to let them know that their art is fun and important. Every piece does not have to be displayed and can be changed regularly so that children can observe their progress. (Medford 2020.) Educators can encourage children to use their works to set up the environment so that they can feel the pride and security of being in a beautiful environment full of their works.

According to the children's life experiences, educators need to work with the children to determine the theme or background of the drawing and guide the children to imagine and create around the theme or background. The theme or background should be age-appropriate. Don't design it too difficult, children will get frustrated because they don't have mastery. Also, don't make it too easy, children will find it boring without a challenge.

Educators need to continuously observe, evaluate, and continuously improve drawing activities in order to better guide and support children's drawing. Evaluation and feedback are

essential. It can be feedback from peers, it can be self-assessment, or it can be from children's responses. The evaluation methods can be various, it can be observation records, interview results, and self-assessment forms. These records can be used as supporting documents for the child's individual development plan. This guide will provide a template form for educators to self-assess based on observing children's drawing process.

Not all children do well in drawing activities. There will always be problems of one kind or another, and when problems arise, educators need to use leading questions to teach children how to solve problems with an open mind. During this process, it is inevitable that children will experience frustration. If the child still wants to try, educators need to guide children to persist through constructive efforts or attempts, turn adversity into prosperity, see the results of their own efforts, and regain confidence. When the child is very frustrated and does not want to try again, the educator does not have to force him but consider the underlying reasons, whether the activity design is inappropriate, the material is insufficient, or other, and can be checked according to the evaluation form.

### **Drawing pedagogy of three years old children**

#### **1. Three years old children's drawing characteristics**

Three-year-old children will draw some complete shapes, although the lines are not smooth and the shapes are irregular, such as circles, squares. They don't make plans before drawing and only get the inspiration to name their drawings when they're done. They will share and explain the drawing with other people, even though it may be difficult to tell what they are describing in their drawings. The colors they use can be out of touch with reality and prefer to use one color. (Mcilroy 2020.)

2. Fine motor: Three-year-old children can hold pens well with their accustomed hands, often at the tip. Educators can train children's pen grasping skills through the selection of suitable pens. For example, educators can help children develop a good tripod grip by using triangle crayons. Thick oil pastels and easy-grip washable markers are also great options. (Mcilroy 2020.)

3. Material: Educators can provide as many art materials as possible at this age. There is no need to focus solely on drawing with a pen. Such as sand painting, clay, hand tear painting, stickers, etc. Even forks, sponges, and paper rolls in daily life can be used, the purpose is to let children experience the fun of painting. Safety scissors and glue can also be introduced to children at this stage.

4. Topics and context: This age group is mainly for children to paint freely. Simple creative themes in festive or seasonal backgrounds can be appropriately introduced, such as watercolor pumpkins, sticker Christmas trees, finger snowman paintings, etc. The goal is to let children feel the cultural atmosphere and seasonal changes, and be exposed to as many drawing tools materials as possible.

5. Recommend: This is the stage when children are extensively experimenting in the field of painting. Educators should provide children with sufficient time, materials and opportunities to encourage children to enjoy the fun of painting and drawing.

### **Drawing pedagogy of four years old children**

#### 1. Four years old children's drawing characteristics

Four-year-old children begin to combine two or more shapes or forms to form a basic image. They try to draw rectangles, triangles and diamonds, although they may not look alike. They decide what to draw before they start, and their drawings look more like what they describe. They try to draw people and can draw details like eyes, limbs, etc. (Mcilroy 2020.)

2. Fine motor: They can hold pens like adults and can try to use more drawing tools for them, such as brushes of different sizes, colored pencils, oil pastels, etc. Four-year-old children are already very happy to try to draw letters by changing curves, and they can be encouraged to draw their own names and show them in each work. (Mcilroy 2020.)

3. Material: This stage is when children learn to use various painting tools, try to let children learn to use various brushes and pencils and understand their different painting and drawing effects.

4. Topics and context: Stories are great introductions. Educators can choose topics that children are interested in and preferred stories. During the storytelling process, children already have a picture in their minds. Educators can ask children to draw the most impressive scene in the story, or the ending they want.

5. Recommend: When a child is having a hard time, show the pictures already in the picture book to give them inspiration. When a child is having difficulty with a specific problem, educators can also provide constructive suggestions and guidance. For example, if the watermelon color is running out, educators can ask her "what color the watermelon is, and what other things we can put in the same color on paper?" Instruct the children to cut the red



paper in the shape of a watermelon instead. During the drawing process, children learn to deal with problems.

### **Drawing pedagogy of five years old children**

#### 1. Five years old children's drawing characteristics

Five-year-old children start to be very creative, they master most shapes and begin to imitate some letters. They can be colored within the lines, probably the use of color is still a bit impractical. They draw people, animals, houses, vehicles, trees, plants, flowers and rainbows, all with detail. Children now draw spontaneously and begin to show their own backgrounds, interests and experiences in their drawings. They draw what they know. They usually place themselves in the middle of the drawing. (Mcilroy 2020.)

2. Fine motor: Five-year-old children are able to cut along the line with scissors. This stage is the perfect time to train children to use safety scissors. Educators can have them cut out the margins of their work, or organize decoupage, sticker painting activities. (Kid sense 2022.)

3. Material: Children at this stage should have been exposed to most drawing tools and materials, and it is important for them to be free to choose what they like. Educators can try to guide children in drawing activities to learn to mix different materials or tools and find out which is most appropriate in which situation.

4. Topics and context: Themes or backgrounds can be more enriched, festival themes, interdisciplinary integration, stories, cartoons, multiculturalism etc. can be introduced.

5. Recommend: Educators can start teaching children to observe and draw. This means teaching children how to draw inspiration from how things look, rather than from their knowledge or imagination. (Medford 2020.) Educators can regularly take children to observe drawing outdoors and learn to observe from different angles, which will produce different effects.

### **Drawing pedagogy of Six years old children**

#### 1. Six years old children's drawing characteristics

Children of this age have their own drawing style that adults can generally recognize. Although they use the same outline or shape to draw different people, they distinguish them with clothes, headgear, etc. Children's better understanding of depth and distance is reflected in the drawings. Their use of color becomes very realistic. But they frame the picture the way they see the world. (Mcilroy 2020.)

2. Fine motor: Six-year-old children are able to write letters and numbers accurately and cut shapes neatly. They also can draw detailed pictures with recognizable objects. (Kid sense 2022.)

3. Material: Educators may provide giant paper for their team drawing at this stage, and a drawing book for them to draw their own storybooks.

4. Topics and context: Children at this stage can learn about the connection with the world through drawing, and a lot of knowledge can be learned by combining with drawing. Therefore, this stage of knowledge fusion background or theme can be widely used. Six-year-old children can start drawing narrative pictures. Educators can begin directing them to draw interesting slices of life, recalling or imaginative episodes.

5. Recommend: Educators can encourage children to draw their stories at this stage and create picture books. This is a pre-writing strategy to cultivate writing thinking. The more the children have their own style of drawing, the more they need to organize more team drawing activities, strengthen the sense of teamwork, and understand that art activities can also be completed in cooperation with each other.

### **Recommended Books**

Lowenfeld, V., 1954. *Your child and his art; a guide for parents.*

This book answers a lot of typical questions about children's artwork and how to connect creative activity to children's happiness and psychological mood.

Parrish, E., 2010. *Doodle Zoo: Oodles of Roaring, Squawking, and Wriggling Doodles to Complete and Create.* Buster Books.

Ryan, N., 2008. *Fabulous Doodles.* Buster Books.

Catlow, N., 2008. *Holiday Doodle Book.* Buster Books.

Parrish, E., 2010. Doodle Farm: Oodles of Mooing, Oinking, and Quacking Doodles to Complete and Create. Buster Books.

These are picture books with scenes and themes that allow children to use their imaginations. They are great for kids to draw in their free time, much better than coloring books.

## Drawing Activity Evaluation

Assessment forms are used by educators to assess drawing activities, not children's work. The assessment form is personal and records each child's performance in the drawing. In terms of accessibility, participation, experience, freedom, drawing style, fine motor, multifunctional interaction, including closeness to life, cognitive development, cultural manifestation, personality development, and more support, It examines whether the activity is suitable for the child and whether the child is effectively supported and developed in the activity.

### Drawing Activity Evaluation Form

**Child's Name:**

**Child's Age:**

**Dates of Evaluation Period:**

1. Accessibility for drawing activities

1.1 Availability of materials or tools  not enough  Moderate  Adequate

Difficulty  Moderate  Easy

1.2 Accessibility to the topic or context  Difficulty  Moderate  Easy

2. The child's participation  Can't complete the work reason:

Complete the task but not interested reason:

Enthusiastic participation and complete the work

3. The child's experience

- Self-expression
- The joy of success
- Satisfaction
- Interactivity

#### 4. The child's freedom

- Originality
- Flexibility
- Creativity

#### 5. Multifunctional interaction

- Connection to daily life
- Cognitive development
- Cultural embodiment
- Child personality development:
  - Patience
  - Attention
  - persistence
  - Observation
  - Overcome frustration

#### 6. The child's drawing style

- layered composition
- Color saturation
- figurative
- abstract
- narrative

#### 7. Fine motor

- Skilled
- need to practice

#### 8. Need more assistance

- Thinking guide
- Drawing skill
- Demonstration drawing
- Physical display

#### 9. Additional Notes:

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