SILENCE AND OBSERVATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION. THE PEDAGOGICAL BASIS OF A SYMBOL LITERACY APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Natalie Lombardi Calleja

Silence and Observation in Early Childhood Education. The Pedagogical Basis of a Symbol Literacy Approach

Two main assertions of the Symbol Literacy Approach are that humans live in a symbolic reality and that they employ various reasoning processes in order to learn. This study aims to explore if and how 'silence' and 'observation' may be used as pedagogical tools to heighten children's cognition, awareness and ability to better "read" and interpret reality, using a positive perspective. Furthermore it aims to equip children in enriching their ability to increase their symbolic repertoire.

A theoretical framework was adopted to tackle the first research question which assured a solid basis for the development of an empirical study to tackle the second research question. The empirical study formed part of a collaborative action research practice which applied a quasi-experimental design by using convenience sampling. It was conducted with two kindergarten 1 classes, namely, their respective qualified early childhood educators and the fourteen, three to four year old children in their classroom. The study embraced an epistemology of a sociocultural nature and a sociocultural historical activity theory as a theoretical perspective. A qualitative approach was adopted with data gathered through participant and naturalistic observations. Findings were analysed through an inductive and thematic approach. A coding procedure was used and similar nodes were knotted into six main themes. A number of recommendations for further practice and research were also made. The findings of this study provide fresh knowledge and insight for educators to grow professionally and deduce the potential ways in which the pedagogical tools of silence and observation help children to process, interpret and access reality.

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Keywords:

Symbol Literacy	**Mindfulness in Education**	**Silence**
Observation	**Sociocultural Psychology**	**CHAT**

DEDICATION

To my late mum Rita.

Your good-hearted personality nurtured me with life's true values. You were attuned to the beauty of silence and an exemplar of morality. I am sure that you would have been so proud to hear about and read this dissertation.

I Miss You!

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Embarking on this project was to a certain extent a shot in the dark. At times the path taken seemed exciting and fun but at other times it was mind boggling and very challenging. I was blessed throughout this journey with a good dosage of encouragment which fueled my motivation to remain focused and detemined in making it successfully to the finish line. Thus, with sincere and heartfelt gratitude I would like to thank:

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My husband Tonio. Thank you for being there. Your aid and affection were a pillar and backbone throughout this project. You're Ace!

My father, sister and brother - Joe, Christabel and Denzio. Your moral backing and uplifting words strengthened me.

All my dearest friends who were present and listened patiently to my reasoning trail for a number of times. You know who you are and I truly thank you!

The project has now reached its end. The path had its tolls and my completion timing was not the swiftest, but holding a completed piece of work draws such a wonderful feeling of joy and accomplishment within. That said, the most rewarding thing here is without doubt the self-reflective ongoing journey I set to walk, which enriched me with symbolic repertoire and allowed me to further grow holistically. I have definitely cultivated the know-how to ruminate and reconnect with nature and the precious values of life and love.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Introduction

"Silence is educational oil…it is part of a journey of some kind" (Lees, 2012b, p. viii, xix).

Background, Context and Personal Perspective

I have been an educator for the past eleven years and everyday occurrences that I experienced as a classroom teacher taught me to be dynamic and to accept change. Keeping abreast with developments allowed me to broaden my horizons, gain knowledge and solidify my personal educational viewpoints. I truly relate to what Banner, Jr. & Cannon (1999) say, that,

> despite its intrinsic difficulty, learning is like love. Just as there has to be some magnetism, some mystery, between you and a loved one…, so you have to feel an attraction for a topic, a subject, or a problem before you can learn about it (p. 23).

For me, the educator's life is a learning journey in itself especially when one gets to know about a new approach and 'feels an attraction' for it. I found out about the emerging Symbol Literacy Project through my role as a literacy support teacher, three years ago. I still recall the first day, when together with my colleagues we were exposed to the approach. The whole idea was still in its infancy back then and just a proposal. The underlying philosophy was complex for me at the time, but I remember how I felt an immediate attraction for the project and was intrigued by its method of presenting the activities to the children and its educational value. I have always insisted on education outside school premises throughout my teaching career and being an artistic person myself, I further appreciated the immense educational value that the Symbol Literacy Project can offer to school children. This episode has led me to collaborate in the development and delivery of these activities as well as to observe children's reactions when engaging in the project. Lehmann Oliveros (2012) remarks that "museums…[are a] structure [where] silence is maintained" (p. 468) however in my observations I was struck by the children's seeming inability to interact with the museum environment which was novel to them. When they first entered the art museum, most of them did not stop to observe their surrounding or connect with the environment around them.

Furthermore, throughout the project I also met various kindergarten educators who felt that children are so caught up and alienated by a cluttered world that they find it difficult and do not know how to be silent, to observe and engage fully with an environment they find themselves in. This has led me to reflect whether children are losing the skills of silence and observation and whether children need to be shown how to interact with their environment.

Symbol Literacy is tightly connected to socio-cultural theory which looks at psychological experiences that result from social and cultural situations of people's lives in different settings within their communities (Valsiner & Rosa, 2007). In this regard, humans are seen as active participants affiliating with their surroundings and producing comprehension for their world through their interaction with others (Scribner, 1997). This holds within an educational context too. When speaking about Picard's writings, Caranfa (2004) mentions that his philosophy was one that advocates the holistic education of human beings. However, he further mentions that the overburdened curriculum led humans to give in to the 'mechanical onward flow' leaving them doing everything mechanically in a world full of noise. Thence, he defines silence as a vital tool for education and proposes that if silence were integrated as a classroom practice, children stop examining their knowledge in a non-concrete and detached way and instead start posing defined and personal questions. Zimmermann and Morgan (2016) state that silence is also related to listening and observation since it allows human beings the time to acquire information and process it. Thus silence may become a pedagogical tool.

Likewise, just as silence can be a pedagogical tool so can observation. Observation and silence are, or at least should be, natural partners. When talking about Leonardo Da Vinci, Gelb (2004) mentions that had he not been provided with enough time to linger by the river and just observe the natural world, he would not have turned into the great visionary we know of today. Children are keen observers from the day they are born, however, providing them with opportunities to engage

with rich environments and surroundings enhances their observation skills (Engel, 2015). Furthermore, rich environments offer children additional possibilities to reach their full potential and attune with the given reality whilst at the same time, provide adults with a golden chance to perceive and notice a child's complete ability (Snow, 1989; Vygotsky, 1933/1978).

> To say that silence is in some way religious is valid as to say it is secular. The [positive silence] discussed as beneficial for school settings may be partly spiritual but it also looks at the benefits to mental health, thinking style and the rhythmic aspects to do with [a] change from constant rush and busyness…[thus] the idea of [positive silence] is more linked to slow-time than it is to prayer (Lees, 2012b, p.100).

Various wisdom traditions have explored and used silence and observation as a tool in the past. In this regard the centuries old Eastern practice of meditation has been developed in the West as mindfulness meditation (Kaiser Greenland, 2010). People like Thich Nhât Hanh (1987; 2011; 2015) and Kabat-Zinn (1990; 1994), promote mindfulness techniques in the Western world. There is a growing corpus of literature that is pointing to the benefits of mindfulness in the classroom, including the early years class (Haskins, 2011; Mindful Schools, n.d.; Thierry, Bryant, Speegle Nobles & Norris, 2016; Zelazo & Lyons, 2012). By practicing silence as a pedagogical tool, the children are dealing with being in the present moment and subsequently increasing their awareness of the environment around them by "observing and reflecting on one's ongoing experiences on a moment-moment basis" (Zelazo & Lyons, 2012, p.156). However, this stage can only be achieved if "education is based on silence [and hence] teaches students not only to think logically or critically or rationally, but also to see and to feel the whole of things" hence "cultivation of the whole human person" (Caranfa, 2004, pp. 226/227).

Assumptions, Aims of the Study and Research Questions

The main reason why I set out on this study was the assumption that, if well guided, young children can be mindful and able to silence themselves in order to become whole with the environment around them and hence boost their observation. Hence, I pondered that maybe if more research is carried out, the skills of silence

and observation could be viewed as pedagogical tools that might assist the children in specific ways to process, interpret and access reality.

Based on these assumptions, and in conformity with the literature and reflections stated above, the underlying aims for this research are:

- to explore if and how 'silence' and 'observation' may be used as pedagogical tools to heighten children's cognition, awareness and ability to better "read" and interpret reality, using a positive perspective;
- to examine the benefits of a positive silence in the classroom/school environment;
- to equip the children with the mediating tools of silence and observation in order to enrich their ability to increase their symbolic repertoire

Subsequently, through these insights, the following inter-related research questions for this study emerged:

1. Can silence and observation be used as pedagogical tools to promote cognitive processing and the acquisition of new knowledge?
2. If silence and observation are pedagogical tools, in what way do they help the child to process, interpret and access reality?

Methodological Design

The first research question will be mainly investigated through a literature review in Part A of this study. This will assure a solid basis for the development of an empirical research that will continue to shed light on the first question and help me answer the second question in Part B of this study.

Part A of this study will be focusing on the perception and issues of silence in education and how human beings' actions and interaction with the reality around them, leave an impact on this perception. This will then lead to a literature examination of the work being done in the field of early childhood education that is

promoting the skills of silence and observation. It also examines ways that it is being implemented in diverse educational systems as a pedagogical tool to enhance cognitive processing and acquisition of new knowledge. Key sources for the literature include Lees's (2012b) book, *Silence in Schools*, Caranfa's (2003, 2004, 2010) writings mostly upon Picard's work on education, *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociocultural Psychology* (Valsiner & Rosa, 2007), *The Mindful Child* (Kaiser Greenland, 2010), the work of Gelb (2004), and Gellel's (2010, 2018a/b) writings upon children's spirituality and the Symbol Literacy Approach.

Therefore, tackling the emergence of positive silence in schools, overcoming the issue of weak silence, will give rise, in this part of the study, to the examination of the benefits and the growing concept of mindfulness in education. This will in turn give rise to how silence and observation techniques aid human beings to access the world around them by occasionally going back to society's roots. Thus, examining socio-cultural theory and the initiation of additional holistic approaches towards the education of the child. Further sources for the literature, amongst others, include the works of Herman (2017), Engel (2015), Zembylas & Michaelides (2004), Haskins (2010; 2011), Thich Nhât Hanh (1987; 2011; 2015), Kabat-Zinn (1990; 1994), Ollin (2008), VanSlyke-Briggs (2014), Reddy (2014), Snel (2013) and Mindful Schools (n.d.).

Part B of the study shall be dealing with the empirical research which will be conducted with two kindergarten 1 classes, namely, their respective qualified early childhood educators and the fourteen, three to four year old, mixed gender children in their classroom. Since this study tackles a process whereby children socially acquire new knowledge, it embraces an epistemology of a sociocultural nature. Hence, from a theoretical perspective, a sociocultural historical activity theory (CHAT) will be adopted. The study adopts a collaborative action research practice approach and applies a quasi-experimental design. In choosing the classes and collaborative teachers convenience sampling will be adopted. Furthermore, data will be gathered through participant and naturalistic observations. The data obtained will be analysed through an inductive and thematic approach. A coding procedure developed both manually, and through the computer software NVivo, will be used

in order to identify individual nodes. Findings will then be discussed and recommendations for further practice and research will also be made.

Relevance and Contribution

In line with the aims of the study, it is hoped that by providing the skills of positive silence and observation as pedagogical tools for children, they will be able to use them as mediated tools in order to process, interpret and access a reality which is pregnant with symbolic meaning. One hopes that this study sheds light on the impact that outcomes of implementing the use of positive silence and observation within the early years classrooms. It should help us better clarify whether these mediated tools help children to "mindfully retrieve these symbols in their various forms in order to be able to move beyond the challenge of understanding and be able to reconstruct meaning" (Gellel, 2018b, p. 112)

The authors that explore the value of silence do so through the point of view of spirituality in silence or from a psychology perspective, however not enough study has been made on the pedagogical potential of silence. It is hoped that, this research will contribute to and expand this incipient field of study through literature and the empirical study. It is also hoped that it will be effective for educators and schools given its fresh knowledge and insightful concepts on how one can grow professionally as well as adopt a culture in the classroom/school of positive silence and observation. Lastly, this research is important to me as a teacher as it will hopefully help me be more effective in what I care most about, that is, the mindful, holistic and the emotional/artistic development of the students.

Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation is split into two parts. Part A tackles the first research question by reviewing theoretical literature. Part B tackles the second research question through an empirical study and eventually merges both parts of the dissertation.

Part A

Chapter 1 will delve into the issues of silence and observation and will shed light on how these skills assist human beings holistically and intellectually. In addition, studies of techniques and methods, promoting silence and observation skills, including their benefits for the field of education will be examined.

Chapter 2 will explore how humans interpret and interact with the reality around us. It will continue to illustrate how silence and observation techniques aid a person in acquiring new knowledge and make use of cognitive processes in order to process, interpret and access reality. It will argue that a mindful attitude, that makes use of silence and observation, is all the more needed given that humans are social beings who access and interpret reality through culture. This chapter will also portray the philosophical background of the Symbol Literacy Approach and why silence and observation skills are considered to be fundamental to this pedagogical approach.

Chapter 3 will examine children's reality prior to attending mainstream education and how they approach, decipher and deal with the said reality. It will also examine how children's native intellect skills are being fulfilled in mainstream education and thus probe into classroom realities with reference to holistic environments, cognitive growth and pedagogical approaches that foster positive silence and observation.

Part B

Chapter 4 will discuss the theoretical framework as well as the reasons that will guide me in choosing and designing the methods of the empirical research. The chapter will also provide information about population criteria, procedure, data collection and evaluation tools, programme design, and the technique that will be adopted to enhance the skill of silence and observation.

Chapter 5 will present and analyse the data gathered through the in-class and outdoor fieldwork activities. Analysis will be conducted through a thematic approach. The main themes that will emerge from the data will be used to analyse and reflect on the findings. These themes will be related to the two key concepts of silence and observation. Furthermore, it will discuss the main research findings that emerge from the study in relation to the literature reviewed.

Conclusion will offer a summary of the research carried out and main findings. It will show how the study has responded to the two main research questions and will offer implications for practice followed by the limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

PART A

Chapter 1

Silence and Observation

"By preparing our minds to observe and absorb everything, and to discover the possibilities around and inside us, we open ourselves up to success in our own lives" (Herman, 2017, p. 22).

1.1 Introduction

In order to provide a context and a direction for this study, this chapter reviews the literature on silence and its function in education, the skill of observation and the world of mindfulness. Through the works of Picard (1952), Caranfa (2004, 2010), Less (2012a/b), Zembylas & Michaelides (2004), Haskins (2010, 2011) and VanSlyke-Briggs (2014), amongst others, the first sections discuss the general idea of silence, what is actually meant by silence and the role that silence plays in education. Section 1.2.2 presents the understanding of silence that underpins this research. This is followed by an overview of the art of observation and succeeded by the relation that individuals have with the concepts of listening, time and space. Lastly, section 1.5 provides a detailed overview of meditation and mindfulness techniques that make use of silence and observation skills with reference to the works of Kaiser Greenland (2010, 2016), Naumburg (2015), Jennings (2015), Reddy (2014) and Snel (2013), amongst others. This section will also give an overview on how the technique of mindfulness is being applied with children, as from a very young age, in order to equip them with tools that assist them to enhance their self-awareness and awareness of others. These tools mostly focus on the skills of silence and observation thus promoting cognitive processing and acquisition of new knowledge.

1.2 Silence

"While the common assumption is that silence is the opposite of speech, many thinkers throughout history…have emphasized that silence is not the mere absence of speech…[but] is a very rich phenomenon" (Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004, p.

193/401). Although silence is intricate in nature it still deeply pertains to the human being, in fact Picard (1952) considers it in the mould of the 'world' which is thus real and substantive. Glenn (as cited in Lees, 2012b), says that "like the zero in mathematics, silence is an absence with a function…' (p.2). This links to what Ollin (2008) says, when referring to Jaworski's work, that silence can be implying various conditions and interconnections and is not only associated with an absence of noise. Through her work Voegelin (2010) states that the common practice of not being attentive and willingly listening to secondary sounds does not make it more likely that these are not altering one's reality as it is indeed happening.

Lees (2012b) is of the opinion that,

> the word 'silence' appears with astonishing frequency. Writing about noise, there it is; writing about quiet, there it is; writing about people, there it is; writing about animals, there too. It is never far from being used. Silence is so multi-natured it is helpful in a huge variety of contexts and in linguistic terms is a pliable word, linked to intricate networks of different signifiers (p. 3)

Notwithstanding, she remarks that silence is personal and what one makes out of it may differ from everybody else's. She states that currently in society there is an ignorance of the vast explanations and signs of silence "despite the fact that silence *does* mean many things to us and we *do* experience it in many ways" (Lees, 2012a, p.2). In addition, she acclaims that perceiving silence as simply the lack of intentional audio in fact defeats the meaning of the word silence, since silence "has a meaning that is fully open to exploration if the effort to do so is made" (Lees, 2012a, p2). This goes hand in hand with Picard's (as cited in Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004) notion, "when language ceases, Silence begins. But it does not begin because language ceases. The absence of language simply makes the presence of silence more apparent" (p. 193).

"Paradoxically, we human beings tend to feel uncomfortable, if not fearful, in silence. This is understandable when one considers how our lives have been stripped of silence and solitude and replaced by noise, restlessness, entertainment, and action" (Haskins, 2011, p.34). In his book, Schafer (1994) concurs with this when he speaks about the constant need to create sound and conform with an absence of solitude. Humans prefer rejecting silence and are fearful of it. In fact, he says that

"when one stays for a while in an anechoic chamber, that is, a completely soundproof room, one feels a little of the same terror" (Schafer, 1994, p. 256). Vander Woude (2008) also expresses her discomfort when she ended up attending a solo camp and was left alone with a tent and a few supplies. This notion of discomfort is seen as true especially in the west (Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004). Schafer (1994) mentions that "silence for Western Man equals communication hang-up. If one has nothing to say, the other will speak" (p.256). This ties with what Belanoff (as cited in Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004) mentions that the West is "a culture fearful of silence" (p.195). This view sets one thinking about the perception that Western and Eastern cultures have of silence.

"In the ancient Orient…silence was valued rather than feared…silence in Asia has commonly been entirely acceptable, whereas in the West silence has generally been considered socially disagreeable" (Oliver, as cited in Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004, p. 196). Lees (2012b) speaks about this and states that silence is seen as a state of existential awareness to the eastern mind, however it is comprehended with difficulty by a western mind. She continues to say that silence is in fact not the lack of knowledge of what to say next, it is a different way of knowing what to do next by staying silent (Lees, 2012b). It is just that "western thinkers tend to perceive silence as anything negative which lacks discourse" and their thought "lacks a holistic perspective" (Lees, 2012b, p. 66/67). Silence is accepted as a vital part of a conversation in some eastern cultures as it allows one to evaluate the importance of what is being communicated (Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004). Voegelin (2010) mentions that unlike noise, silence is a vital part of language because it promotes listening which is an important aspect in the exchange of conversation. Furthermore, according to Lehmann Oliveros (2016) "in the case of the social functions of 'silences', such as turn taking in conversation, the borders between people can be more or less permeable depending of certain conditions of the setting" (p3). This somehow relates to what Picard (as cited in Caranfa, 2004) mentions, that silence equates to the 'third speaker' during a dialogue and that speech evolves from silence so it should eventually return back to silence.

Considering all this, “there are numerous personal stories and considerable scientific evidence suggesting that silence can exert positive influence on our individual lives and our relationship to the world” (Prochnik, 2011, p. 14/15). Schmidt Bunkers (2008) depicts this positive effect when she mentions that humans can find comfort in silence in the same way that they find comfort in a ‘soft warm blanket’ on an extremely wintry day. Furthermore, Picard (as cited in Caranfa, 2004) states that “there is an immeasurability in happiness that only feels at home in the breadth of silence. Happiness and silence belong together just as do profit and noise [and utility]” (p.224). Nhât Hanh (2015) mentions that silence gives room to appreciation of the current state and conditions within as well as around, and hence why it also contributes towards happiness. Yet, on the other hand, one might debate that if everybody, “values silence so highly, why is there so little of it? Why…does there appear to be a growing consensus about the benefits of silence at the same time as the world seems…to be getting noisier?” (Prochnik, 2011, p.14/15). It seems as if, at present we are not distinguished by our choices or actions anymore but by an automated self-moving in rhythm to the on-going occurrence of noise (Caranfa, 2004). Haskins (2011) argues that attention is simply broken by distractions, such as, external noise and one’s internal chatter. Zen master Thich Nhât Hanh personifies our sounds and noises as ‘Radio NST’ and ‘Non-Stop Talking’ since it is very common that one ends up thinking and contemplating repeatedly the same string of thoughts, most of which are normally unpleasant. “Even if we are not talking with others, reading, listening to the radio…or interacting online, most of us don’t feel settled or quiet. This is because we’re still tuned to an internal radio station, Radio NST (Non-Stop Thinking)” (Nhât Hanh, 2015, p. 45). In other words, switching off is essential in nurturing more positively our being and especially our mind. When this is mastered we would be all more 'awake' to our own self and reality (Nhât Hanh, 2015). As a way to combat radio NST, Nhât Hanh (2015), writes about the ancient benefits of silence and the ways it can offer awe, insight and nourishment. According to Schafer (1994), in the olden times, shrines dedicated to silence were available, whereby one could retire to in case of sound fatigue and/or in order to regain psychological composure. However, as Caranfa (2004) notes, with reference to Picard’s work, “the individual is nothing in a world

where the machine rules or controls us [since it] alters our very use of language and existence itself" (p. 219). Personally, I find that Caranfa's (2004) arguments reflecting Socrates's writings, are a suitable reflection of true silence where he mentions that silence shows us the limitations of dialogue and the real domain of our creative potential thus, self-knowledge is actually the introduction of oneself into a world of awe, reflection and silence. Once silence is mastered as a regular experience, it becomes a state of mind which is separate from the awareness of oneself (Lees, 2012a).

According to Lees (2012b) "silence is slow, contrary to today's" fast paced culture (p.112). It is however a strong need as it tunes us more deeply to our inner selves allowing space for self-reflection and creativity (Haskins, 2011). In addition, Picard (as cited in Caranfa, 2004) states, "when a man is in relation with silence, he is not burdened by his knowledge. Silence takes the burden from him…Silence [is] woven into the very texture of the whole approach to knowledge" (p. 224). In the same way as sleep is needed to restore energy in the body, quiet periods are important to refresh the mind and recompose mentally and spiritually (Schafer, 1994). Caranfa (2004) states that, "without silence, the soul finds it difficult to process new things that the outer senses bring to it" (p. 224). This notion is also found in Lees (2012a) when she refers to Siegel's work and mentions that,

> the mind has been strengthened or is strengthening itself to be in a state of quietude [which can be achieved] by nature [since] it is nature – meaning the outdoors of birds in trees, winds through leaves…that is the framework of silence. As a framework for the creation of silence it is its source (p.4).

1.2.1 Silence in Education

Lees (2012b) commences her book by saying that "silence is the new [educational] oil" (p.vii). She compares the functions of silence in education to the functions of oil by stating that "from a global perspective, both are sourced and mined with effort…both involve a power of transformation that can change the world…both are valuable" (p.vii). Yet the difference between the two is striking. Unlike oil, silence is available freely (Lees, 2012b). When Caranfa (2004) speaks about Picard's work, he

shows that Picard's "philosophy of education aims at the wholeness of human existence" (p.218) and that he defined silence as being essential for education. It makes the mix of our rational and emotional notions of the human being possible, and it also allows us to consume and explore the world we live in. However, Picard notes that this philosophy might be hard to promote if "practical subjects [continue to] fill the curriculum, thus ensuring that it remains continuous with the world of 'immediate profit' and the 'enormous mechanism of noise'" (Caranfa, 2004, p.223). He also claims that an education which allows our children to interact with their spirit and free them from routine and noise can only take place with an education which is based on silence. Furthermore, Picard (as cited by Caranfa, 2004) states that "to base education and teaching on silence is to render the profitable, the useful, and the noisy subservient to life that has a purpose... [and] to make silence not only the place where the self is re-created, but also the necessary condition for happiness' (p.224). Notwithstanding all this, most discussions on education often ignore the importance of silence in learning (Caranfa, 2004). Zembylas and Michaelides (2004) discuss this in their work and in fact query, "at what cost to the individual, to teaching and learning, and to society in general does education ignore the pedagogical value of silence?" (p. 193).

However, before talking about this aspect, it is important to clarify between what Lees (2012b) refers to as 'positive/strong' and 'negative/weak' silence (p. x). Lees (2012b) claims that "educational silence is a new concept [and] understanding how it works or might work in schools is only beginning" (p. 75). According to her 'it is being variously named' but even though she calls it 'silence' it is built on a theoretical framework in which weak silence is barred (Lees, 2012b). But what is weak silence? Huey-li (2001) points out that silencing is still widely viewed "as an indispensable disciplinary act that aims at establishing an ordered milieu for effective teaching and learning" (p. 157). Silence is typically employed by teachers in order to increase productivity or punish which eventually leads to tension (VanSlyke-Briggs, 2014). When asking teachers for their interpretation of silence in education, Lees (2012b) remarks that "they speak of Victorian

schoolchildren…strictly obeying the teacher's command to be quiet as a mouse. They think mostly of noiselessness and an absence of aural content. Literal silence" (p. x). Referring to Walkerdine's work, Lees (2012b) says that weak silence has been described with feelings of rejection, oppression, belittlement and dismissal. Furthermore, when a school exerts silence as coercion "it fails to engage with the long term work of schooling as a dialogic environment [and creates] oppression" (Lees, 2012b, p.63). According to Lees (2012b) "a coercive 'educational' silence is used to control or manipulate circumstances: the stare, the sharp pregnant pause, the look, the subtle movement of a hand. This is not silence – it is control" (p.63). In the context of western education, Zembylas and Michaelides (2004) noted that the 'fear of silence', within which the western education system is rooted, is one reason why silence is perceived as negative. This notion is also mentioned by Lees (2012b) when she states that unfortunately, unlike eastern philosophy, western education still adapts a framework where silence is regarded as uncomfortable, lacking conversation. In this regard, she adds that "silence in schools should be the strong kind because only the strong kind is positive and is truly silence" (p. 67).

"Education has not yet properly understood why negative, 'weak' silence is anti-educational and detrimental to well-being or why positive, 'strong' forms of silence have a valuable place in schooling" (Lees, 2012b, p. x). Lees (2012b) claims that the lack of research about strong silence being used in schools is why educators are not conscious about the benefits and how it can be used as a pedagogic tool in their classrooms. In addition, she claims that teachers are also generally unaware of the impact of using negative silence to control their classroom, despite the substantial literature on the subject. Luckily however, this perception is slowly changing and research is starting to show that silence in western education is also beginning to be perceived as positive (Zembylas and Michaelides, 2004, Lees, 2012a/b, VanSlyke-Briggs, 2014). To give sense to her meaning of strong silence, Lees (2012b) relates it to the works of Dauenhauer and Bruneau and their definitions/names of silence, 'slow time' and 'deep silence' (p. 3). She states that positive silence "is a force and power with a life of its own…it is a topic that inspires passion for good school practice [and] requires a dialogic, caring, people-oriented approach" (Lees, 2012b,

p. 80/105). Contrary to today's fast paced society 'silence is slow' and it is natural for people to adopt and develop in order to grow as individuals, helping them learn and understand the world around them better (Lees, 2012b). With reference to Simone Weil's work, Caranfa (2010) states that,

> she regarded the classroom not as a place where one comes to solve problems, and not as a physical structure within which the life of the student unfolds for a given number of minutes. Instead, she saw the classroom as a place where one wants *to be* in order to develop the wholeness of our being (p.575)

Caranfa (2004) addresses silence as the foundation of learning by examining and reflecting upon the works of others, such as Picard, Plato, Weil, Jaspers and Matisse. He claims that "we must find ways of using silence in our pedagogical practices so that our discourse does not degenerate into mere empty words… but becomes a means to self-knowledge" (Caranfa, 2004, p. 211). Talking about Whitehead's work he mentions that "the education system has failed to provide a whole education" (Caranfa 2010, p.562) and thus insists that designing an educational curriculum should go beyond adopting a most economical, high-tech and practical approach. Amongst his conclusions to Picard's work, Caranfa (2004) conveys that,

- by embedding or introducing silence in our classroom discourse, questions of self-knowledge cease to be abstract and impersonal, and they instead become concrete and personal;
- the focus of the classroom is listening, which alone renders us attentive to the silent voices of our spoken words;
- reintroduce[ing] into the classroom spontaneity or creativity along with the genuine sense of the search for self-knowledge. The teacher and the student learn to hear each other's words of silence as a prerequisite for creative learning (p. 229).

These conclusions are set parallel to the potentialities proposed by Zembylas & Michaelides (2004) to restore the importance of silence within education and to answer the question set by the authors which is mentioned earlier in this section. The authors propose that,

- creating spaces for embracing silence…is an act of encouraging self-criticality without ignoring the dangers of normalization that come with that;…
- rethinking the value of silence in the classroom might restore in both students and teachers a lost sense of humility and wonder (Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004, p. 106/208).

Hence by looking at these works one surely can agree that "silence is easy to incorporate in the classroom. It is free and…simple…[and] if used well, it can be an opportunity for students to begin to carve out of the school day a moment to quiet the mind and ready the self for new information" (VanSlyke-Briggs, 2014, p. 41). Furthermore, the schools who fully embrace positive silence exercitations will reach "an experience of strong/deep/contemplative/slow silence…[thus], silence [will] become educational in that it benefits the education offered" (Lees, 2012b, p.69).

1.2.2 Silence in this Research

Lees (2012b) refers to 'silence as a state of mind', that is, a sort of silence which "is more than neurobiological facts. It is an inner realisation…it is positive and whole…it is a space, a place, a feeling [and] an experience…it is not an absence of sound" (p.7). The literature reviewed manifests that schools ought to have silence as one of their valuable characteristics therefore silence cannot be negative (Lees, 2012b). In essence, unless otherwise indicated, for this study silence is understood as that of a positive nature, one that nourishes the soul and "infuses almost every dimension of one's life" (Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004, p. 194). This goes hand in hand with what Ollin (2008) states that "silence in the classroom is seen as a professional tool, to be used for the benefit of the learners to enhance their learning process" (p. 207). Furthermore, by referring to Peim & Flint's work, Lees (2012b) mentions that this "'interference' that silence offers becomes useful for schools. Its ability to be outside the various demands and pressures of improvement becomes an antidote to a world of mainstream education that has lost its way in a forest of measurements, assessments and demands for evidence and standards" (p.39). Therefore, "rethinking the pedagogical value of silence is also an act of reclaiming a place for silence [and observation] in education" (Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004, p. 196).

1.3 Observation

When talking about Leonardo Da Vinci, Gelb (2004) notes how his infinite curiosity and 'quest for truth' led him to put his observation skills into practice. When

Leonardo was captivated with the elements of flight he satiated his curiosity by silently observing how birds fly (Gelb, 2004). In his book, Beveridge (1957) mentions that the initial matter about observation that is, if humans do not observe carefully and with an unbiased mind they "frequently miss seemingly obvious things, but what is even more important, they often invent quite false observations" (p.98). By quoting Goethe he refers to the notion that unfortunately human beings tend to "see only what [they] know" (Beveridge, 1957, p. 99). This coincides with the works of Tompkins & Tunnicliffe and Tunnicliffe & Litson (as cited in Johnston, 2009b) that "observation is also influenced by previous ideas and interests" (p. 2512). In a way this relates to the thought that individuals "do not really see things simply as they are; [they] see them as [they] see them…previous understandings, fears and desires, education, expectations: all feed into [human's] perception" (Cooke & Macy, 2005, p.14). Contrastingly, Herman (2017) states that if human beings "choose to see the world differently, with a critical eye, [they will be] choosing to be exceptional" (p. 277). In Chapter 5 of his book, Csikszentmihalyi (2008) explains that humans generally use sight for basic reasons of survival and direction and generally fail to observe in more detail the intricate visuals they are presented with every day, which could lead to a lot of opportunities to enter a 'flow state'. People often go through this flow state when using a camera. Through the lens of a camera they are suddenly aware of the infinite possibilities around them and they are more mindful of their present surroundings (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008). Beveridge (1957) mentions that two components exist in every observation "the sense-perceptual", which is optical and the "mental", which is "partly conscious and partly unconscious" (p. 101). Furthermore, research has also shown that "although we like to think of observation as second nature – something we all can do without thinking – it is in fact a process and a skill which takes practice to learn" (Jasparro, 2015, p.74). Harlen (2001) shows that if properly trained in the skill of observation, children are able to shift from general observations to ones that are more distinct since their eye will be trained to focus their observation on what's truly essential.

1.3.1 Observation in Education

> 'Take out your book and turn to page 78.' Visit schools around the country and we still hear such statements dominate classroom conversations, lessons driven by content experienced in a paper... Learning through text is certainly a valuable form of study, but a series of recent events drew my attention to the experiential side of learning as well, especially learning to "read" the world around us. Imagine all the things we can learn by simply observing the world around us! What would happen if we spent a bit more time helping students develop this power of learning through observation as well? (Bull, 2014).

Through her works, Johnston (2009a/b) comes to the conclusion that in primary classrooms, the power of observation is generally overlooked, however making time for children to learn to observe the world around them can reap great benefits. "Powers of observation can be developed by cultivating the habit of watching things with an active, enquiring mind" (Beveridge, 1957, p. 104). The more one is given the time to practice the skill of observation, the more compliant one becomes to it. Literature shows that observation is a skill which is important and sometimes vital in various jobs and practices, such as in, medical (Beveridge, 1957; Jasani & Saks, 2013); teaching (Johnston, 2009a/b, Harlen, 2001); social work (Hingley-Jones, Parkinson & Allain, 2016); and Marines (Jasparro, 2015). With reference to early years education, Johnston (2009a) acknowledges the works of various researchers and concludes that "observation is recognised as an important initial skill in early years and primary science" (p.15). She further depicts that children's observational skills get better as they advance in their life and the skills can be supported by 'focused and structured teaching'. In fact she states that if properly supported,

> the outcomes will be greater in terms of all enquiry skills, as well as understandings and attitudes, where the children:
> - are central to the learning;
> - explore and discover things about the world around them that arise from their own initial curiosity and observations;
> - construct their own understandings through their observation and exploration;
> - are supported by teachers and peers through social interaction (Johnston as cited in Johnston, 2009a, p. 17)

In her study with primary science school children, Johnston (2009b) also noticed that children apply their previous knowledge and experience to what they are presently observing. This allows them to analyse and illustrate their observations in their head. This correlates with the notion that "observation is not passively

watching but is an active mental process" (Beveridge, 1957, p. 104).

1.3.2 Observation using Art

Literature is showing that "the interaction with and appropriation of art – through reflection and meaning making – bear the mark of an imagination that is, at once, personal and cultural" (Zittoun & Glăveanu, 2018, p. 350). Programmes are being created in various industries which use art to nurture observation skills. At the same time, these programmes are also proving that the purpose of visual art is far beyond recreational and can be advantageous for people from all walks of life (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008; Gellel, 2018b; Herman, 2017; Jasani & Saks, 2013; McGovern Center, 2008). Csikszentmihalyi (2008) expresses how "the visual arts are one of the best training grounds for developing these [observation] skills" (p. 107). He further states that not only masterpieces can create such intense 'flow experiences' and that art can be everywhere, even in what we perceive as everyday and common. Being an ex-lawyer and art historian, Herman (2017) is one of the people who combined her passions and created a course of study, titled 'The Art of Perception' (p. xv), intended for professional growth. Her training programme, successfully used to train top personnel from organizations such as the NYPD, is "designed to fine-tune their attention to visual details, some of which might prove critical in solving or preventing a crime" (Hirschfeld, 2009). Herman (2017) explains how the programme adopts the use of art to help trainees to approach the use of their skills on the job with an open mind. In medicine, art is also being used to create more attention to visual details. McGovern Medical School and UTHealth School of Dentistry enrich their student's observational skills following Herman's (2017) footsteps. In a fresh partnership between the schools and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, a course titled: 'Art of Observation' is created. According to the schools,

> observation, description, and interpretation are essential skills in clinical diagnosis. These talents are also requisite in the visual arts. Thus, if students can improve their skills of observation in a safe environment by first looking at selected portrait art, this will translate to enhanced skills when observing medical photographs and, ultimately, when seeing a patient (McGovern Centre, 2008)

In addition, Rebecca Lunstroth, the Assistant Director of McGovern Medical School, said that every art piece comes along from a story, in the same way as every patient comes with his/her own background (UTHealth, 2015). Jasani and Saks (2013), with their study, portrayed how using Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) as "a method to focus visual observations to enhance critical thinking and language skills" (p.1327) together with its three elemental questions, "formed a basis for unbiased observation, and…enabled students to organize their thoughts and reflect at a deeper level" (p. 1330). Furthermore, they noted that a significant number of learners connected the idea of 'noticing visual details' to mindfulness when saying "[this exercise] will help my awareness when observing patients on various levels…it will make me more aware of what I'm observing and why I interpret what I see in certain ways" (p. 1329).

On the same line of thought, a new local emergent approach, which shares a general understanding of the programmes just mentioned, and holds silence and observation, as its pedagogical basis, is the Symbol Literacy Project. This project, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, aims at assisting children to "acquire learning in a variety of forms and situations, including through their ability to stop, observe and to try to 'read' art, both in local and foreign context" (Gellel, 2018b, p. 119). The approach, which is very close to VTS, follows the same perception,

> the will to promote critical thinking skills through observation, analysis, speculation and synthesis, but it also makes sure to use other techniques that foster wonder and interaction with a community that is now bygone and with the meaning that the artist had developed within a specific context, which was not that of a museum (Gellel, 2018b, p. 118).

1.4 Listening, Time and Space in Education

One simply cannot do without the act of listening. It is part of our nature and very substantial in our everyday lives, more so for a child at the foundation of his/her educational journey (Hay & Nye, 2006; Kinney & Wharton, 2008; Lees, 2012b; Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004). This also holds for the educator in the classroom

since “children give us information in many different ways [and] it is important… for us to learn the many different ways of ‘hearing’ children. This means actively listening to and observing children’s reactions and responses” (Kinney & Wharton, 2008, p2). Unfortunately, as previously mentioned, the skill of listening is somehow subsiding as man is increasingly struggling and failing at it (Caranfa, 2004). This incompetency is rendering the child less able to speak too, “for listening and [speaking] belong together: they are a unity” (Picard as cited in Caranfa, 2004, p. 219). Many people are commonly overburdened with daily tasks and simply don’t seem to have the time for listening to and actually comprehend others (Nhât Hanh, 2015). By exploring Beatty’s work, Caranfa (2004) states that listening fits the criteria required in developing and enhancing one's soul and is key in achieving genuineness in our communication. Furthermore, “listening can direct you to silence” (Toop as cited in Lees, 2012a, p.1), alongside observation, which group up the qualities necessary in pondering issues of important matter and value (Hyde, 2008). All this sums up the increasing necessity of why individuals need to retrieve and perceive the importance of listening and silence skills, even if it means that educators offer it in schools through modelling and set opportunities. Educators cannot expect children to listen attentively and engage with silence if they are not taught how and what to listen for (Hyde, 2008). In her book, Voegelin (2010) presents a good analogy that describes this. She mentions that,

> when training as a classical musician…you cannot possibly…recognize what is being played…unless you know what you are listening for, and the ‘listening for’ is never its sound but its visual point of reference…[only then will one be truly] listening to the language of music…[and] appreciate its sonic material (p. 25)

Schafer (1994) speaks about what he calls ‘ear cleaning’ and states that it is “a systematic program for training the ears to listen more discriminatingly to sounds, particularly those of the environment” (p. 272). He mentions that there is a spectrum of exercises that could be developed in aiding this 'ear cleaning'. However, he stresses more on prioritising the teaching of respect towards silence. In addition he remarks that throughout time the “soundscape of the world is changing…[and] modern man is beginning to inhabit a world with an acoustic environment radically different from any he has hitherto known” (Schafer, 1994, p. 3). This can be linked

to what Zimmerman and Morgan (2016) state that "the sonority of nature in general…enriches our perception and understanding of the world [in fact] sound has played a crucial role in human development as a way of expression and of communication" (p400). In her work, Lehmann Oliveros (2012) shows that our understanding of sounds varies through time and making sense of it relates to social and cultural occurrences. She does this by mentioning that listening to an aircraft flying was not possible prior to the first flight and this relates to what Schafer (1994) also notes, with reference to Jung's work, that "a sound event is symbolic when it stirs in us emotions or thoughts beyond its mechanical sensations or signalling function" (p. 169). In fact, Schafer (1994) says that "for the soundscape researcher [sounds] are not merely abstract acoustical events, but must be investigated as acoustic signs, signals and symbols" (p. 169), which once again links to what Lehmann Oliveros (2012) mentions, by referring to Herman's work, that "as well as we can talk about voices from the environment, we can make reference to voices of the self as voices inside the society of mind, and thus we acknowledge the ever-dialogical nature of human kind" (p. 467). In her other work, Lehmann Oliveros (2016) associates this notion of sounds and culture with 'sense-making and decision-making' and says that "cultural psychologists acknowledge that the same sign is internalized in different ways from person to person according to the historical, social and cultural guidance involved in the specific context" (p. 5).

However, if human beings lose the skill of being in silence and of truly listening to all the given sounds around them, they will end up perceiving only the 'noise pollution' instead of the 'natural soundscapes', 'the sounds of life' and 'the rural soundscape' (Schafer, 1994). Hence, going back to the educational context, that is why there is an increase in the need for educators to "take the time and space necessary to stop, listen and critically examine the modes in which silences have grafted themselves onto particular performances" (Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004, p. 203). Furthermore, by engaging in active listening and 'tuning' children become conscious of their own awareness manifested in compassion or sensitivity to a string of events (Hay and Nye, 2006). The classroom environment aids in promoting this 'tuning.' Weil (as cited in Caranfa, 2010) argues that "the classroom is a gymnasium…, a

house of silence where we become attuned to the rhythms of our physical, mental, and spiritual life in their relation with the more encompassing natural rhythms of the day" (p575). In his book, Alhadeff-Jones (2017) speaks about the "experience of temporal pressures" in education and that "time is often considered as neutral however the meaning it takes remains socially constructed" (pp. 1-2). According to him, even education plays a role in how humans learn to connect to time and the rhythms of life (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017).

Notwithstanding this, when one finds the balanced time to interact with space, that person becomes aware of the reality around him/her and hence reconnects with the dimensions of time and space (Caranfa, 2004, 2010; Hay & Nye, 2006; Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 1994; Lees, 2012a/b; Nhât Hanh, 1987, 2011, 2015; Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004). Malaguzzi (1993 a/b) advocates that since our own environment moulds us, the professional's pedagogy in class must be in line with this very same space for an excellent educational experience to occur. Also, in his work Taylor (2009) mentions that "the environment is indeed a 'silent curriculum' that can provide positive [or negative] learning experiences" (p.25), however, "constructing the time and space for silence means understanding the multiple meanings of silence as a part of teaching and learning" (Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004, p. 209). In her research Ollin (2008) finds that "links between silence and time were of relevance, with a strong equivalence between certain types of silence and 'time to think'" (Ollin, 2008, p. 276).

Thence, from this and other work reviewed, it can be maintained that silence is a way of how to provide for this attunement, especially in a period where the concepts of time and space are being lost. According to Hay and Nye (2006) children enhance the skill of appreciation and awareness of the present moment of place and time 'the here and now' when silence is exercised in class, leading also to the feeling of wholeness in one's existence. Several benefits relevant also to this, are relating to self and going beyond the actual present space and time hence resulting in looking at life from a more logical perspective (Hay & Nye, 2006). In section 1.3 it was noted how Csikszentmihalyi (2008) shows that any knowledge individuals process can induce a state of flow. Whilst seeing is an elementary act done

spontaneously, visual data we are continuously taking in can give rise to the ongoing possibilities of entering this same state of flow. This highlights the meaningful demand to nurture the here and now as from very early childhood since it progresses also in the 'there-and-then' where one dwells with the past, present and future (Hay & Nye, 2006). Champagne (2003) talks about the notion that the here and now is experienced also when children speak of past events and future ones, however she believes that "young children's' experience of time and space is mainly an experience of *here* and *now*. Even their anticipation is part of their present" (Champagne, 2003, p.51). Ashperger (2008) notes "the NOW is missing in the construct of TIME just like the true 'I' is missing from the construct of 'me'. The present moment is the 'missing moment' the empty space between the 'I' and 'me' and the NOW and the TIME" (p. xxiv). Hence why silence is the ultimate force, which is the privy of the friars and the mystics (Schafer, 1994). This leads me to the last two sections of this chapter.

1.5 Meditation and Mindfulness

Two practices that can be seen as possible methods to foster silence, observation and connection with the here and now, are meditation and mindfulness (Nhât Hanh, 1987, 2015; Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Kaiser Greenland, 2010). Kabat-Zinn (1994) states that "meditation is simplicity itself…[but] is not just about sitting, either. It is about stopping and being present" (p. 11). When one meditates one perceives how to face challenges and learn from them (Kabat-Zinn, 1994), hence "meditation is a concentration-based approach which 'train[s] participants to restrict the focus of attention to a single stimulus'" (Baer as cited in Lees, 2012b, p. xiii). On the other hand, mindfulness aid humans in being aware of every task they are accomplishing by concentrating in the present (Nhât Hanh, 2011). According to Nhât Hanh (2011) all human beings "have a seed of mindfulness" (p.15) in them and with thorough exercising the seed grows within and provides mindful energy when needed. Nhât Hanh (1987) presents a story of a straightforward chore that many human beings tend to hastily accomplish. He portrays dish washing under two different perspectives. One is pure dish washing for having cleaned dishes and the task is unmindfully accomplished. The second perspective is washing dishes for the

purpose of washing dishes, fully conscious and truly experiencing the act of dish washing. This example illustrates that “mindfulness can change us from the inside out…it can shift us from reaction to response” (Gelles, 2015, p. 252) and makes us focus on living attentively.

Even though “mindfulness is an ancient Buddhist practice…this relevance has nothing to do with Buddhism per se or with becoming a Buddhist” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p.3). In fact, Lees (2012b) states that the two practices are usually embodied under the term ‘silence practices’ thus one can agree that “engaging in moments of silence…are not born of, nor do they belong to, any particular religion, but are of a broader spiritual nature” (Haskins, 2010, p.15). To a certain extent, both meditation and mindfulness differ from spirituality however they are somewhat connected through “the most fundamental meaning of the word, as an attempt to appreciate the deep mystery of being alive and to acknowledge being vitally connect to all that exists” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p.6). When talking about mindfulness, Gelles (2015) states that the best method of nurturing mindfulness is by means of meditation. In fact, “mindfulness meditation, as practiced today, is designed to make us more aware of our thoughts, emotions and physical sensation” (Gelles, 2015, p. 8). Comprehending and getting in touch with oneself is not only a process of the brain, it comes by balancing understanding and meditative experience (Kaiser Greenland, 2010). Nhât Hanh (1987) mentioned that being conscious of one's breathing can instil awakening into the present and hence concentration. It also sets an increase of activity in parts of the brain, specifically the prefrontal cortex which is in charge of our higher-order thinking as well as emotions linking us to others such as compassion and empathy (Gelles, 2015, pp. 65, 252). However, this is not always easy especially when anxiety and stress are present. Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990; 1994), who started using and researching mindfulness towards the end of the 1970s, “developed a rigorous study of the effects of meditation on the human brain, and paved the way for mindfulness training in business, organizations, schools, and other professional settings” (Gelles, 2015, p. 45).

In a way mindfulness matches the three types of silence, portrayed by Zembylas & Michaelides (2004) as enriching 'personal growth', arising 'sense of thoughts' and identifying 'unspoken understanding' (p. 203). Likewise, it matches Yust's (2004) thoughts that silence educates humans to embrace their communities' deeds with a tranquil and sympathetic manner. As Kabat-Zinn (2013) states,

> although the cultivation and awareness is called *mindfulness*, it is important to realize that it could equally well be called *heartfulness* – because it is not merely about the head and cognition, but about our entire being and our multiple intelligences and ways of knowing and being, including the cultivation of kindness toward oneself and others (p. xi).

This leads to the next and final section of this chapter, which continues to tackle the first research question of this study.

1.5.1 Mindfulness in Education

While attending a convention with freshmen students, VanSlyke-Briggs (2014) observed that the phone filled a gap to the uneasiness they felt, which held them back from either talking to the person beside them or just be in silence. She states that "chatter, including digital chatter, fills every empty space [and] our culture encourages [it]" (VanSlyke-Briggs, 2014, p. 38). Yust (2014) mentions this too when saying that nowadays "the internet can be understood socially as a 'third place' (apart from home and school)" (p.134). Likewise Schmidt Bunkers (2008) stresses on the significance of finding time for silence in the midst of our busy digital school lives and the noise it presents, since these quiet moments aid students with being in control of their lives instead of just a pawn in it (VanSlyke-Briggs, 2014). Through Vassilopoulos & Konstantinidis's (2012) study one can note that silence "seems to be positively used as a facilitative device enabling students to gain access and experience their feelings" (p.100). Thus, if approached in a pedagogical manner, elevating the consciousness of the here and now can be beneficial for both learners and educators (Huey-li, 2001). As previously noted, this can be achieved by promoting present moments of calmness in a school environment which encourage "slowing down, quieting the mind and body, and experiencing silence [that in turn] nourishes the spirit…the whole child" (Haskins, 2011, p.34).

Although study of positive silence in education is still emerging "scientific research

into understanding the effects of silence practices such as meditation and mindfulness with children and teachers is making a [positive] impact in international academic circles" (Lees, 2012b, p. 78). According to Kaiser Greenland (2010) when children are mindful they have a clearer vision with regard to setting and accomplishing self-goals, are more assertive and work hard for a better world. As noted by Thierry et al. (2016), "the ability to control emotions, thoughts, and behaviours is critical for success in school and in life" (p. 805) hence one of the reasons why "silence in schools, through technique practices such as meditation and mindfulness is growing" (Lees, 2012b, p.78). That said, there is still a long road ahead however luckily, due to various scientific researches, silence is gradually gaining respect and trustworthiness (Lees, 2012b). Naumburg (2015) refers to various studies about positive effects of practicing mindfulness with kids and shows how children exhibited significant progress in self-growth attitudes.

Furthermore, Jennings, Roeser & Lantieri (2012) speak about 'contemplative practices' which equate to practices for 'conscious focusing of attention' (p.373). These practices aid children with being alert and meticulously process the knowledge they acquire from their surroundings. Hence, along with practicing 'open and receptive awareness' gaining 'insight and clarity', the children's cognitive processing is also encouraged (Jennings et al., 2012, p. 373). The authors continue to say that,

> although the idea of introducing contemplative activities into secular educational settings [may be] new to mainstream education, alternative methodologies such as Montessori and Waldorf have long included contemplative activities as part of the curriculum and take a mindful and care-based approach to a wide variety of curricular activities (Jennings et al., 2012, p. 373).

Even Caranfa (2010) himself spoke about the 'contemplative method' fostering holistic education, and mentioned that if educators are filled with the presence of silence in their lives, they will be in a better position to offer such an ambient in schools. Furthermore, children have the natural ability of learning from adults through imitation and observation and this gives grownups the opportunity to educate them in the most relevant ways (Naumburg, 2015). Therefore, by cultivating mindfulness in schools, all educational agents personally gain from its

benefits and given that practices, such as, directing attention and working on memory, are employed, it enhances acquisition of new knowledge and cognitive processing (Flook et al., 2010, Jennings et al., 2012).

Mindful Schools is an organization formed by an assembled team of passionate individuals in Oakland California, who through their collective experience in education, social justice and mindfulness, strive to transform school communities from the inside out (Mindful Schools, n.d.). Their co-founder and programme director, Megan Cowan, also the author of the 'K-12 Mindful Schools Curriculum' holds the belief that mindfulness provides young people with a compass to navigate their lives. Mindful Schools, founded in 2007, is nowadays one of the key players in the movement to integrate mindfulness into the everyday learning environment of K-12 classrooms and holds a community of more than 10,000 graduates (Mindful Schools, n.d.). All the agents pertaining to Mindful Schools believe that mindfulness practice is 'the foundational element necessary to create a healthy education system [and that] mindful classrooms begins with you [the teacher]' (Mindful Schools, n.d.). In the early 2000s they presented their "first round of formalized mindfulness in education interventions training teachers in self-care, resiliency and wellness and training students in mindfulness techniques" (Mindful Schools, n.d.). Snel (2013) believes a lot in mindfulness for schoolchildren and developed a technique called *Sitting Still Like a Frog*, which "turns the cultivation of mindfulness into something more akin to a game, an experiment, and an adventure [for kids]" (p. xiii). According to Reddy (2014), "a child who grows up having mastered the elements of mindfulness is always headed for greatness" (p. 17) hence this is why through her book she presents a set of activities that assist the children in mastering these elements. Along the same lines, Kaiser Greenland (2010, 2016), author of *The Mindful Child* and founder of *Inner Kids Programme* in the United States, acted as a fundamental role in developing mindfulness exercises suitable for kids and her mindfulness programme is amongst the first to be used in educational settings. The theory of ABC's (Attention, Balance and Compassion) is a frame of mind philosophy whereby one shifts from a fixed to a growth mindset and its foundation is the classical meditation practice that nourishes knowledge, values and focusing (Kaiser

Greenland, 2016). As depicted in Figure 1.1, one can see that Kaiser Greenland (2016) placed the skill of 'focusing' at the centre since according to her, firm attention serves as a basis to the other skills. Furthermore, the six skills are scaffolded in a way that mastering 'quieting' and 'focusing' will create a shift towards the skills of 'seeing' and 'reframing' and then be able to work within the domains of 'caring' and 'connecting'. Therefore, this implies creating a shift from 'inner experience' self-awareness, towards the 'outer experience' awareness of others (Kaiser Greenland, 2016). Through her work she also states that, for one to reap the full benefit of the mindful games, pertaining to each skill, they should not be acted out with the children just for the sake of doing them, but rooted in a mindset as a classroom philosophy (Kaiser Greenland, 2010; 2016). This stimulates children to engage with cognitive processing whilst learning new information as well as promotes the philosophy of holistic education and silence and observation as pedagogical tools. As Haskins (2010) notes in her work,

> [when] we seek and work towards holistic education reform at all levels, we might consider the value of creating learning environments that offer exercises in silence. Not the silence commanded by a higher authority (adult), but the silence that fosters inner peace, creativity, and renewal (p 15).

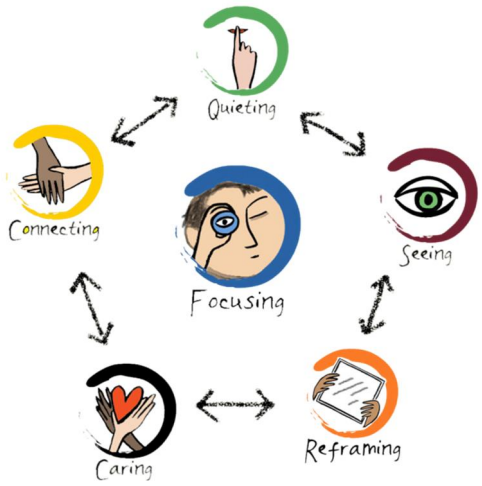

Figure 1.1 The circle of six life skills

(Kaiser Greenland, 2016)

1.6 Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this chapter outlined that silence plays an important part in human lives and helps to achieve that entirety which most people long for (Haskins, 2010). In addition, if the holistic development of the individual is what education is striving for, then instead of detaining, it must kindle and voice out this silence realm in the learners (Caranfa, 2003). This can be achieved through, "meditative practices of all sorts [which] are important to 'silence in schools'…[since they] are a fundamental part of the richness of the picture of silence in schools" (Lees, 2012b, p. xiii). Nevertheless, the first research question of this study cannot be fully answered using only the investigations presented in this chapter. Thence, it is vital to explore how human beings in general interpret and interact with the reality around them, how they acquire new knowledge and how their cognitive processing works. This might also highlight if the said human beings make use of silence and observation skills along the way when interpreting and interacting with the reality around them. The following chapter shall be reviewing the literature in these regards.

Chapter 2

Human beings' interpretation and interaction with reality

"If up till a hundred years ago a person was born into a fairly homogenous community which utilised, shared and mainly interacted with one worldview of symbol systems, today…we interact with a vast array of symbols which inevitably influence one's inherited worldview and ancestral symbol systems" (Gellel, 2018a, p.21).

2.1 Introduction

After arguing for the educational benefits of silence and observation, this chapter explores how individuals interpret and interact with reality. This will provide more insight on human's cognitive processing and thus explore if the skills of silence and observation ameliorate this process and the acquisition of new knowledge. The first sections will provide an overview of cognitive process and analogical reasoning along with Vygotsky's psychological theory and cultural history activity theory. These theories are examined since they aid in giving an overview of ways that human beings use to interact with reality. The said theories are closely linked to the sociocultural psychology, which is the epistemology chosen for this research and which will be outlined next. Section 2.3 will explore how reality is passed on through generations and why humans choose to interact with it through myths, rituals and traditions, most of which involve the techniques of adopting silence and observation. It will also explore the art of symbols and human interaction and communication with reality through symbols. This leads to the examination of how these generated interactions enhance a society with its cultural capital in a variety of forms such as art, music and architecture, and assist newer generations to develop. Lastly, section 2.4 will outline the framework of the Symbol Literacy Approach, which is the underpinning inspiration of this research. This will be done in view of all the discussed philosophies and knowledge, and thus illustrating why the pedagogical basis of the Symbol Literacy Approach is built around the skills of silence and observation.

2.2 Cognition and Analogical Reasoning

From a sociocultural standpoint, the ability to perceive, create and understand something (cognition) has been habitually employed as pertaining to human beings and considers an individual as a component of culture and society and never alone in the learning venture (Cole, 1990). In his work Salomon (1993) shows how social events and the surroundings of a human's life are the fuel that influence the thoughts.

Through their work, Salomon & Perkins (1998) observed that cognitive abilities mature in a way when learning is shifted from a particular situation to another situation with related underlying concepts. Along the same thoughts, sociocultural approaches tackle influences upon beliefs pertaining to socialisation and therefore the processing of that knowledge is attributed to cognitive development (Valsiner & Rosa, 2007). This factor is in compliance with cultural psychology theory. Slunecko and Hengl (2007) maintain that "as opposed to traditional psychology…cultural psychology considers individuals as resulting from historical circumstances" (p.46). As a matter of fact, in cultural psychology, culture is not perceived as something external to the human being but as an internal part (Wundt, 1921). Cole (1996) also mentioned that "people would develop cultural tools and associated cognitive skills in domains of life where such tools and skills were of central importance" (p76).

In addition to cognitive abilities, Gust, Krumnack, Kühnberger & Schwering (2008), extended the view by noting that "analogies can provide a basis for integrated large-scale cognitive systems" (p.8). Their study indicates that a significant component pertaining to diverse cognitive aptitudes such as analysing, retrieval of memory and creativity is related to analogical reasoning. Hence, the elemental gist of an individual's ability can be attributed to analogical thinking too. Holyoak and Thogard (1995) argued that, for a person to actually create an analogy one must perform what they called a 'mental loop'. The person creates these analogies to solve problems and to sustain an argument when discussing matters with other human beings (Holyoak & Thogard, 1995). Furthermore, the person manages to do this from their cultural repertoire which they would have acquired throughout their

course of lives (Gellel, 2018b). Notwithstanding, in light of Goswami's (1992) label of 'relational similarity constraint' (p.49), at times for a valuable analogy to be made, one needs to look beyond the actual object in itself and think about its anatomical and relevant elements too. This viewpoint is in line with Sternberg's (1977) logic when he said that, "we reason analogically whenever we make a decision about something new in our experience by drawing a parallel to something old" (p.353).

As humans we are rooted in a framework that forms our social self and the way we think (Santrock, 2017). This is in line with Kuther's (2017) notion that,

> as novices, children learn from more skilled, or expert, partners by observing them and asking questions. The expert partner provides scaffolding that permits the child to bridge the gap between his or her current competence level and the task at hand (p. 177).

Thus effective scaffolding assists a child to cognitively and analogically understand a situation. Various studies have been made regarding analogical reasoning and cognitive development, most notably by Vygotsky (1935/1982b; 1986; 1933/1978; 1934/1987). Apart from his sociocultural theory, Vygotsky also developed the zone of proximal development theory indicating the gap between the child's authentic and independent growth level and the likely developmental level subject to adult mentoring. In order to further understand how human beings interact with the reality around them the following section will be highlighting Vygotsky's (1929; 1981; 1934/1987) conceptions of his cultural history theory.

2.2.1 Vygostky and Cultural History Activity Theory (CHAT)

"One of the most distinctive ideas of CHAT is that human psychological functioning and development are object-related" (Stetsenko, 2005, p.71). It is widely known that CHAT was generated upon the sociocultural mindset of Lev Vygotsky (1929; 1981; 1934/1987) and is referred to by Engeström (1987) as the first generation activity theory. Leont'ev (1932; 1981) and Luria (1928; 1976), two of Vygotsky's students, continued to expand his theory after his death and eventually it was further developed by Engeström himself who created the second generation of the theory (Cole & Engeström, 1993).

Lev Vygotsky's work was at first censored by the soviet leadership regime, thus

leaving his work undiscovered by the West until the 1960s (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). During the time that Vygotsky was working on his theory, he found it very difficult to comply with the prevailing notion that the environment and human beings are two dissociated entities. On the contrary, he insisted that psychologists should work upon the generated outcome that is formed from the interaction of humans with the environment (Zinchenko, 1995). He worked on the concept of mediated action in order to provide a reason for the system that empowers the growth of human understanding and the development of new knowledge that individuals acquire through the connection with tools, other human beings and artifacts (Zinchenko, 1995). Furthermore, he maintained that the connection with tools, other individuals and artifacts is not fixed but varies across time (Vygotsky, 1929; 1981; 1934/1987). As stated by Wertsch (1998), Vygotsky's mediational means referred to items that "can continue to exist across time and space" (p.30). Figure 2.1, shows a basic way as to how Vygotsky chose to portray his theory.

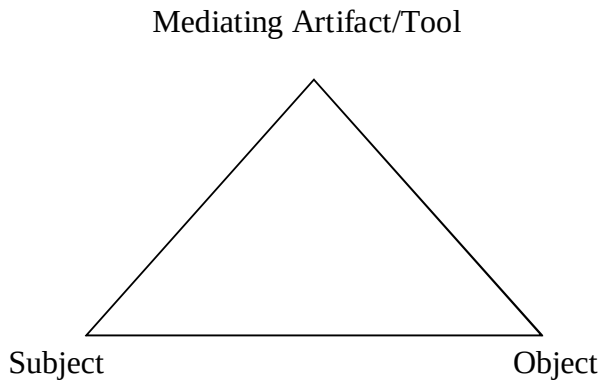

Figure 2.1 Basic Mediational Triangle
(adapted from Cole & Engeström, 1993, p. 5)

Leont'ev (1932; 1981), together with Luria (1928; 1976), continued working on the sociocultural theory in order to overcome "the limitation of the first generation [which] was that the unit of analysis remained individually focused" (Engeström, 2015, p. xiv). Leont'ev managed to achieve this by introducing the concept of activity, hence shaping Vygotsky's theory in a more structured manner (Engeström, 2015). As Zinchenko (1995), points out "in the psychological theory of activity, it

was argued that all mental processes, including personality, have an object activity nature [thus] the focus was specifically on action and not on meaning, as it was for Vygotsky" (p.41). Therefore Zinchenko (1995) pointed out that Vygotsky's view "ignore[d] or oversimplifie[d] the spiritual world of humans, reducing it to object-oriented activity and thereby treating it mechanistically and without regard to any spiritual dimension" (Zinchenko, 1995, p.43).

Engeström (1987) explored Leont'ev's activity theory by putting forward activity system examinations. This outlined the strong tie between one or a number of human beings with their surrounding so as to discover how one factor influences the other and vice versa (Cole & Engeström, 2007). According to Cole (1996), these influences widened mediation by taking into consideration the predominance of economic impacts and thus "develop conceptual tools to understand networks of interacting activity systems, dialogue, and multiple perspectives and voices" (Engeström, 2015, p. xv).

2.2.2 Sociocultural Psychology

The center of sociocultural psychology is the stimulating perception of the interwoven connection between human beings and their social globe (Valsiner & Rosa, 2007).

> Socio-cultural psychology specifically deals with the psychological phenomena that result from the interpretation of experience…[and that] psychological experiences – not encoded in terms of either 'soul' or 'spirit' – exist in different animal species, as the so-called instinct of 'curiosity' allows us to observe" (Valsiner & Rosa, 2007, p.5).

Civilization feeds on, and is set in, the psychological dimension (Valsiner & Rosa, 2007). Therefore, it can be said that the cultural level and the psychological level are effectively tied together (Cole, 1996).

Psychologists who work with sociocultural approaches initiate their research with multiple observations while keeping the human being and the environment in mind (Mead, 1934). This is because human beings are unique and each carry their own

symbolic repertoire thus enabling them to interact in a different manner with the environment around them. They focus on the individual's relationships and their responsiveness to stimuli aroused through the behaviour of others and the environment, thus showing that sociocultural is not superimposed on static psychological experiences but on active ones (Cole, 1996). According to Bruner (1990), the ability of formulating an individual's emotional and mental constitution, on the grounds of just one individual human being, is impossible. Zittoun & Gillespie (2016) claim that this line of thought can be linked to the work of Giambattisto Vico's 'New Science' philosophy where certain notions, which he puts into the limelight, are currently viewed as the core elements of cultural psychology. His theory of the mind was founded on a specific idea with relation to imagination as the crux of the human being's cognitive ability and development (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2016). Vico (1725) spoke about the idea that human beings were always in need to find sense and meaning in their lives, especially in the case of natural wonders for which they could not find any explanation. Consequently, they created myths and stories in order to ease their emotions and feel more knowledgeable of the world they live in (Mali, 1992). To a certain extent, one can say that Vico himself was a precursor of those who inspired societies to apply cultural effects in order to enrich imagination in children, from a very young age (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2014; 2016). Zittoun's (2004, 2006, 2007, 2013, 2017) work also contributed to sociocultural psychology, particularly to the notion that psychological operations depend on symbolic assets and the system of socialisation (Zittoun & Valsiner, 2016). She, together with Glăveanu, argues that "people are interacting with others and, in this process, drawing on material and social elements constituting their settings [thus] call on various forms of available social and cultural knowledge and use them as resources" (Zittoun & Glăveanu, 2018, p.3). This leads to examine what constitutes culture and thus what shapes a human being, enriches one's symbolic repertoire and assists in accessing, interpreting and interacting with reality.

2.3 Representations as means of interaction with reality

Humans create history every day and their deeds, when socialising with other human beings, become a culture's unwritten pattern and rules, thus what they live today is tomorrow's history (Shils, 1981). Through time these actions translate into a culture's innate rituals and traditions that are carried out in a particular society (Shils, 1981). They also assist in forming one's perspective of life, thoughts and attitude hence aiding in acquisition of new knowledge.

Each society has its own traditions and rituals and although the difference between the two may seem insignificant to the common eye, there are quite a few differences (Cooke & Macy, 2005). When an action or a practice is conveyed from one age group to another in a specific culture and has a distinctive connotation to the people of that society, it is usually a tradition (Shils, 1981). On the other hand, the traditions of a society may set rituals within that society. Bell (2009) explains that a series of actions carried out in line with an established structure and dealing with language and movement, are related to rituals. She points out that "ritual[s], like action, act out, express, or perform [the] conceptual orientations" that tradition builds in a society (p.19). In fact, rituals, traditions and language, symbols and signs are often derived from a society's culture. This is so since humans, as a group, seem to be consumed by the aspiration to continuously associate things and to analyse all that is happening around them in order to interpret and communicate with reality (Gellel, 2018b). Thus people transform such happenings into signs or symbols which, amongst many, can take the form of gestures, human-made materials, figures, aromas, creatures and noises (Fontana, 1994; Bell, 2009). In fact, Shils (1981) maintains that various traditions were transferred in the shape of "material objects, beliefs about all sorts of things, images of persons and events, practices and institutions. [The material objects] includes buildings, monuments, landscapes, sculptures, paintings, books, tools, machines" (p12).

In his book, Fontana (1994) shows that "symbols tend to accumulate their meanings slowly, over hundreds of years. Like language, their connotations proliferate along many branches, dividing, following a variety of distinctive routes according to the

cultural context, sometimes doubling back on themselves along lines of influence" (p. 21). However, symbols become symbols only when humans attach a deep meaning to them, otherwise they remain just signs (Cooke and Macy, 2005). Unknowingly, humans tend to give these signs a meaning since they associate them to habitual tactics of the world they inhabit (Bell, 2009). In fact, all the things that we see around us, all the symbols, are mirrors of our own perceptions (Bell, 2009). Moreover, every individual interprets an object, an item, or a symbol according to his/her own experience when s/he encounters it and rarely perceives symbols for what they really are, but perceives them with the emotions that they associate to them. Hence, an object, a mark or a symbol might evoke a sense of joy or happiness for one person, but it might evoke a sense of pain or sadness to someone else (Cooke & Macy, 2005). At the same time, certain symbols relate so much to everyone's life, irrelevant of culture or society and have such a strong global meaning, that their interpretation is almost fixed and where not, the interpretation just differs slightly (Fontana, 1994).

2.3.1 Symbols

The basic need of exchanging information was always crucial for the progress of human culture and also an essential tool for survival (Chandler, 2007). As Herman (2017) puts it "we are all communicators because we all have a constant need to communicate" (p. 180). However, language, as part of communication, is not only about talking. A language is an assembly of body and aural signs, forming sense together thus creating meaning to a person pertaining to a particular society (Slunecko & Hengl, 2007). This is then shifted into inscribed language where a group of distinguished symbols are simultaneously placed (De Saussure, 1959/2011; Bickerton 1990; Pinker 1994; Fitch, 2010). In addition, due to the fact that with written language, sound is not heard, visuals of the person talking are not present and the emotion is not necessarily felt (Levi-Strauss, 1963), humans created specific symbols in an attempt to aid the already established written language to involve emotion. (Chandler, 2007). This language system as we know it today is the ripened fruit of our ancestors who, as Bickerton (1990) argues, even though at that time a

systematic language was not in place, a cognitive system based on drawings was. “In fact, the very practice of writing derives from the earlier practice of drawing. According to the most accurate recent estimates, Paleolithic art dates back as far as the European cave etchings of 30,000 years ago” (Massironi, 2002, p. 38). Fontana (1994) mentions that cave depictions of our early ancestors were also of extreme symbolic value. The caves where to paint their depictions were carefully chosen and considered as a divine nook of induction, symbolising the core of the universe. Furthermore, through these paintings and symbols our ancestors formulated and shaped their culture “but it was not until early in the present century that archaeologists began to realize their extreme importance and to inquire into their meaning” (Jaffé, 1964, p234).

Symbols were always important, even way before the emergence of the first inscribed scripts (Fontana, 1994; Massironi, 2002). They are recognised as the first step towards communication, spoken and written language as we know it today, hence a means of accessing reality (Fontana, 1994). A relation is always perceived amongst the strength of symbols and their history and homo sapiens always tended to associate things, to create meaning out of the survival needs related to their existence (Fontana, 1994). Fontana (1994) highlights the elements of rain and water which features as symbols in various pre historic discoveries. It is clearly noted that it must have been a subject of deep deliberation. In Hinduism the symbol of rain is known as a sacred gift and inspiration. In Greek mythology, Zeus features as the god of the sky who regulates thunder and lightning and hence provides rain along with Zephyros (Greek god of west wind). In addition, rain is considered a deity in various mythologies such as Surupa, Lumo and Lono in Hindu, Tibetan and Hawaiian mythologies (Fontana, 1994).

The world human beings live in is surrounded by symbols, some of them are taken for granted and some of them are more noticeable to the human eye (Massironi, 2002). Thus, the use of silence and observation skills aid an individual to become more aware of these symbols around and to find ways how to make use of them in order to interact with reality (Gellel, 2018b). Moreover, human beings keep the

concept of symbols alive since, given that they cannot resist the urge to create meaning of the world they are living in, they are constantly creating new symbols every day and thus making history (Cooke & Macy, 2005). As Cooke & Macy (2005) put it "symbols…are distinctive human actions that humans needs as long as they need their bodies" (p. 8).

Tackling the notion in this chapter of how human beings interpret and interact with the reality around them, it is appropriate to provide a general description of existing symbols. Building upon the works of individuals like Jaffé (1964), Jung (1964), Frutiger (1989), Fontana (1994), Beer (2003) and Massironi (2002), symbols can be categorised into four specific brackets namely abstract, natural, man made and spiritual. Abstract symbols may take many forms including colours; shapes; numbers and flags. In Buddhism for example, colour symbolism is mostly depicted in mandalas and yantras while in Tibetan Buddhism, in thangkas. Every colour has its own spiritual meaning for meditation and is also associated with a specific Buddha. On the other hand, in Christianity, colours are not used to meditate upon but they are given to ceremonial ornaments to symbolise a specific meaning, such as vestments and candles. However, as stated by Fontana (1994) "colours have an immediate impact on our emotions, possessing the power to arouse or to tranquillize, to gladden or to depress [too]" (p. 66). Hence indirectly humans tend to use colour symbolism to interact with their reality. Furthermore, since some colours represent a different meaning in the culture/tradition/religion or spiritual realm of the Western and the Eastern part of the world, after various researches, man came up with generic meanings/emotions that humans attribute to colours irrelevant of culture/tradition/religion or spirituality (Fontana, 1994; Massironi, 2002). By contrast, symbolic shapes are what complement the emblematical communication of colours and play an important role. The basic shapes of circle, square/rectangle, and triangle, as well as the basic forms of lines, dots and curves, which date back to the Paleolithic Period, were also used as symbols (Massironi, 2002). From a spiritual point of view, the basic shape that somehow carries a similar meaning across the board is the circle.

> Whether the symbol of the circle appears in primitive sun worship or modern religion, in myths or dreams, in the mandalas drawn by Tibetan monks…, or in the spherical concepts of early astronomers, it always points to the single most vital aspect of life its ultimate wholeness (Jaffé, 1964, p. 240).

Thus, this immaculate shape is a means for people to integrate with reality. Through time these geometrical shapes were mixed together and amplified, or else some areas where superimposed on each other thus creating a new symbol and providing a new meaning for people to access their reality. The cross, which is a sacred symbol of Christianity, is one example of this. The basic shape in itself is a horizontal line imposed on a vertical line with the exact same size. However, this was amplified in order to hold a Christian symbolic meaning by elongating the vertical line symbolising the body of Jesus Christ and the shorter horizontal line symbolising His hands. According to Frutiger (1989), the horizontal line on its own represents the humans on earth whereas the vertical line on its own represents God's message. Hence a superimposition of the two lines represents the deliverance of God upon human beings.

By contrast, the symbols which can be listed as natural, are those that the earth gave and still gives to mankind. These are the things over which mankind has no control over and are derived from the earth itself. Thus, natural symbols can be classified as those pertaining to the weather such as wind, sun, fire and water, those pertaining to animals such as air, land and sea animals, those pertaining to flora such as trees, plants and flowers, and those pertaining to land such as stones, mountains and valleys (Jaffé, 1964). One example of how these naturalistic components are used as symbols is the lotus flower. Given its way of growing in the depth of muddy ponds and then rising atop the water and exposing its beauty, for Hinduists and Buddhists it became a symbol of pureness and beauty like a "soul rising from the confusion of matter into the clarity of enlightenment" (Fontana, 1994, p. 105). Specific human-made creations are also considered as symbols. An example discussed by Jaffé (1964) shows how buildings "that ha[ve] a mandala ground plan [are] the projection of an archetypal image from within the human unconscious onto the outer world…[thus] exercise a specific influence on the human being who enters or lives in the place" (p. 243). She portrays this by displaying the

example that the way the city of Rome was built by humans is symbolic in itself having “two main arteries divid[ing] it into "quarters" and [leading] to the four gates [and having] the church or cathedral [standing] at the point of intersection of these arteries” (Jaffé, 1964, p.242/243). In relation to spiritual symbols Fontana (1994) mentions that “the human spirit is considered to be a fragment of the universal energy” (p.122). An example of a spiritual symbol given by Fontana (1994) himself is the symbol of the tree of life. He describes it as a figure of perfect balance having the fruit on its twigs as signs of the sun and as gifts for spiritual development, granting also immortality to the people who feed upon or consume a spirit drawn from the tree.

Notwithstanding, despite these symbols and their meanings, Massironi (2002) says that “the symbolic level will eventually be excluded from immediate knowledge if we are unaware of the relationships that have been established between an image and a meaning in a certain culture” (p. 287). In fact, this notion can also be expressed in the present day. As Chandler (2007) points out, in such a fast paced life, human beings seem to be communicating more with symbols and writing is being substituted by images. They are finding it more convenient to acquire information through icons rather than reading through a mass of words, thus leading to an international need of new symbol creations (Chandler, 2007). However, combining this with previously discussed views, this can be achieved if the related semiotic was in some way studied or encountered before and therefore if one is actually already familiar with its agreeable function, thus implying that everyday human interaction has already mapped up its meaning (Chandler, 2007). With this information one might ponder if the extensive demand for symbols in the present day is wrapping up a circle that transports humans to the former days of the Palaeolithic period in a world without words.

2.3.2 Art and Cultural Heritage

Efland (2002) notes that arousal in intellectual questioning and “heavy cognitive demands on thinking” are often posed by “works or art” (p. 2). He also mentions

that the illustration is not the only factor of a piece of art's 'symbolic character' but it "need[s] to be deciphered, like a code compromising symbolic forms, before [it] can be fully apprehended" (Efland, 2002, p.12). According to Graham (2005), art takes a variety of forms since it involves instruments like paintings, constructions, sculptures, motion pictures and photography amongst others (Graham, 2005). In the past, geometry, language, mathematics and astronomy were also referred to as art. However, over time humans recognised the fact that art was quite diverse than science. Henceforth, as Graham (2005) states, art was viewed as "a source of pleasure or enjoyment" (p.3).

Jaffé (1964) mentions that the braided chronicles of art and religious events, dating far back to the Palaeolithic period, is seen through the evidence of symbol documentation that are passed on to future generations. Through the symbol documentation one can identify the specific meanings that our forefathers attributed to different symbols. Nowadays, the same connotations of art and religion can still be seen on contemporary mouldings and artworks and help individuals to understand the culture that past generations lived which assisted the latter in shaping the reality that present humans interact with. As Massironi (2002) said,

> cultural and social influences determine communicative styles in all media, including drawings. They have to respond to specific communicative needs, developed at certain times and within certain cultural contexts. For this reason, drawings always provide hints to the culture that produced them (p. 265).

Despite all this, one might still ponder, what is cultural capital, gain or heritage and how does it influence how humans interact with the reality around them? Williams (1958) came up with a string of events regarding how 'culture' as a terminology changed its meaning throughout centuries. He showed that initially, culture referred to an individual's maturation, however towards the nineteenth century this altered. People refined the terminology of culture as an entity of its own where it mostly represented the mind's condition portraying the overall academic growth of a person in a society. This moved on to the representation of a wide spectrum of all the things related to arts. Finally, towards the end of the century, the term 'culture'

referred to a human being's lifestyle as a whole, that is, including in it anything that formulated an individual, such as, materialism and spiritualism (González, 2005). Alongside this transformation, the concept of 'capital' materialised. A powerful structure of the design of 'cultural capital' can be attributed to Bourdieu (1982). He focused on the capability of human beings 'reading' the information that culture was giving them and therefore gaining cultural capital. He even pursued this concept in his research related to education (Smith, 2006). Hence, this gave way to researchers to look at culture as a means that equip the human being with information that is transferable from one age group to another (Sullivan, 2001).

Nevertheless, cultural heritage doesn't only refer to constructed and human-made things (González et al., 2005). As previously discussed, an individual's cultural heritage is also composed of the initial language acquired from family settings, social interactions, traditions and rituals, along with, the surrounding organic environment that can be attributed to the heritage inherited from past individuals who experienced life prior to present individuals. Consequently, this provides present individuals with opportunities of creating new notions that will eventually become the heritage that future generations will inherit (González et al., 2005). Thus, conservation of cultural heritage is of utmost importance so that it is not lost but is instead passed on to a younger generation for further capital gain. A fine analogy of this perception can be perfectly expressed through Massironi's (2002) words:

> We live in a world dominated by the…persuasive power of images, which have overcome limits that appeared to be definitive and immovable. First they lost their uniqueness and through reproduction techniques became endlessly repeatable. Then they crossed the boundaries of their static nature, and with the arrival of film acquired the ability to preserve movement and thus to render repeatable events that the flow of time made irretrievable. Then they reached the stage of ubiquity: Television allows the same images to be observed at the same time by different people in faraway places. Finally, they lost their flatness, and by means of virtual reality became interactive, able to respond to exploratory movements made by the observer (p. 287).

2.4 The root of Symbol Literacy Approach

This study explores the skills of silence and observation as pedagogical tools, which are the basis of the Symbol Literacy Approach. At this point it seems appropriate to review the core framework of this approach and at the same time exhibit further relevance to the discussions made in the previous sections of this chapter. Gellel (2018b) expresses that "a symbol literacy approach aims at helping [individuals] to find a balance between knowledge and wisdom, between knowing and thinking, between competence and being…[and] to maintain a balanced and healthy relationship with time and space" (p. 114). Through this balance, human beings will be in a better position to interpret their reality and fully interact with it also bearing in mind the thought that individuals "are transcendental…they go beyond the here and now and try to find and…devise different ways in order to explore and create meaning" (Gellel, 2010, p.44). Furthermore, every time human beings engage with the environment around them, they widen their symbolic repertoire with "the language of symbols, metaphors and concepts" that mankind has created (Gellel, 2018b, p. 116). Therefore, the Symbol Literacy Approach contributes towards enriching the children's repertoire and providing them with the ability of reasoning metaphorically (Gellel, 2018b).

2.4.1 A Sociocultural Perspective Theory

The framework of the Symbol Literacy approach is closely linked to the sociocultural psychology (refer to section 2.2.2 of this chapter). As the term implies it "deals with psychological phenomena that happen because of the socio-cultural aspects of human lives in varied social contexts" (Valsiner and Rosa, 2007, p.1). Valsiner and Rosa (2007) speak about the mind and the body and the wonders that the mind does not work on its own. They believe that it is the body that works together with the mind, however all comes from the mind. Moreover, they express the awareness that consciousness becomes "a result of the internalisation of [social] communication with semiotic materials [cultural], accumulated along the [historical] past of the cultural group, and so capable of planning ahead and transforming the future." (p.8) In this respect, people are not inactive members expecting the world around them to initiate relevant practises for them, but, through their

communications with others, they create the understanding of the world while reshaping events that bring about renewal of individuals, artifacts and mediums in their surroundings (Scribner, 1997).

This is the foundation of Symbol Literacy since it assumes that the more extensive a child's symbolic knowledge bank is, the fuller and richer his/her life will be. It aims at expanding the children's global cultural knowledge bank (Gellel, 2018b). Furthermore, it promotes all this through the use of different rational practices together with creating inferences on similarities (analogical) and associations (metaphoric), as well as, through the means of silence and observation (Gellel, 2018b). As previously acknowledged, analogical reasoning aids individuals to enhance the way they construct their thinking and problem-solving reasoning (Gust et al., 2008; Holyoak & Thogard, 1995). Furthermore, the skill of observation arouses this line of reasoning in children which is often connected with previous experiences encountered in their lives (Gellel, 2018b). Hebb's theory (as cited in Schunk, 2012), which focuses on the idea that "when the cell assembly is aroused, it would facilitate neural responses in other system, as well as motor responses" (p.46), is also applicable to the Symbol Literacy approach.

Schunk (2012) moves on to remark that, "we are born with a large number of neural [synaptic] connections. Our experiences then work on this system. Connections are selected or ignored, strengthened or lost" (p47). With this in mind it can be noted that to strengthen its methodological foundation, the Symbol Literacy approach is shaped upon CHAT. This unites with sociocultural psychology and hence clarifies the connections between human's mind operations with that of past documented occurrences and culture in itself (Wertsch et al., 1995). Therefore, the Symbol Literacy approach is in line with CHAT, since it combines Vygotsky's (1929; 1981; 1934/1987) original fabrication of a socio cultural approach, having a psychological element as his focal point instead of mechanical instruments as its prime operator (Wertsch, 1985; 1991; 1995), with that of Leont'ev's activity theory that "meaning exists just in relation with personal sense (therefore) to reach meaning people have to develop their personal sense" (Postholm, 2015, p. 46).

2.4.2 Symbol Literacy Activities through Art and Museums

One of the main ways through which Symbol Literacy is conducted is through the use of Art present in Museums, Palaces or Churches. In these activities one piece of Art is chosen and delved into through various strategies that include silence and observation, building and use of prior knowledge, role play and imagination.

Hausman (1961) argues that there are people who express their creativity and prefer to pass on their knowledge through different genres of writing such as poems and stories, however, there are others who prefer to do so through other mediums such as art, paintings and movies. He further implies that a person can still learn from a painting or from a piece of art since as someone has to 'read' a story to understand and learn what the writer wants to express, the same happens with a painting. Furthermore, a person has to 'read' a painting, through the skill of observation, to actually comprehend what the painter wants to express or teach (Hausman, 1961). For instance, a painter might want the viewer to learn about the importance of perspective and dimension, hence through a painting, whereby the objects are in a totally different perspective/size from what is usually seen, the painter helps the person to 'read' this information. This will be achieved fully by an individual if observations of the painting are carried out thoroughly and slowly, thus allowing the individual to 'read' it, and then transfer the knowledge it represents (Hausman, 1961; Massironi, 2002).

Efland (2002) speaks about the Davis & Gardner's symbol-processing view and mentions that, "an additional feature of the symbol-processing view is that it establishes the activities involved in making and interpreting works of art as *cognitive* activities" (p.56). This goes hand in hand with the activities provided through the Symbol Literacy approach from the point of view of arts and museums, since children will have the opportunity to visit art museums and observe different paintings from different eras. However, just like Davis & Gardner's ideas, the children do not only look at specific paintings but these paintings eventually become

a symbolic resource for them after they would have analyzed them through a series of 'cognitive activities'. This is so because most of the Symbol Literacy activities follow what Efland (2002) mentions as a set of criteria for how a piece of art/painting can reach a cognitive level. He discusses that it should give reason for:

- The symbolic character of thinking—how symbols develop and change in artistic activities, how artists find ideas, how ideas undergo modification, and how works of art are interpreted by viewers;
- The range, including both propositional (verbal or numerical) and non propositional (gestures, images, metaphors) entities;
- How learners acquire new knowledge and skills by constructive processes (assimilation and accommodation) or enculturation into knowledge communities;
- How prior knowledge conditions the structure of new knowledge;
- How students monitor their own learning (i.e., metacognition) and how metacognitive strategies are learned;
- The cognitive functions of emotions;
- How knowledge becomes meaningful when linked to its social context;
- How meaning is transacted from the situations where it occurs, as, for example, in cognitive apprenticeship, where one learns from more knowledgeable members of specific knowledge communities, or scaffolding;
- The conditions of transfer, that is, ways that knowledge from one domain finds applicability in other domains;…
- The role played by the individual's motives, interests, and purposes in activating learning, that is, the role of human agency in learning;
- How differences in the structures of knowledge require that learners adapt their knowledge-seeking strategies;
- The role played by imagination in the creation of works of art and in their interpretation (p. 78).

Therefore, through the chosen painting for a particular year group in the Symbol Literacy approach, the criteria mentioned by Efland (2002) are achieved and the full experience is provided to the children.

2.4.3 Symbol Literacy Activities through Narratives

When one is aware of symbols and knows that they can be found anywhere, one will also know that these can be a source of inspiration. Writers make use of these symbols in their stories and aspire that when the readers read them they relate with these underlying symbols and get lost into the profound meaning of the story (Massironi, 2002). The same can be said for a piece of art/painting since it also relates a story and as Efland (2002) argues, its "knowledge becomes meaningful

when linked to [one's] social context" (p.78). This aspect goes hand in hand with Massironi's (2002) remark when he points out that if one searches for a meaning of a word in a dictionary one might find multiple meanings, but if the same word is read in a sentence, then one finds only one likeable connotation. Likewise, a specific item drawn in a picture contributes to creating a whole idea to the story portrayed by the picture and if that specific item is not drawn, the picture might communicate a completely different story (Hausman, 1961).

With the use of narratives children grow on a personal level since they comprehend the fact that different people have different feelings and thinking styles and that other people might have different convictions than theirs (Siegel, 2015). This is most likely achieved if a child adopts the skills of silence and observation whilst listening to the narration. When one is silent, one becomes more observant therefore s/he listens attentively and understands more since the mind tends to be clear from hindrances (Nhât Hanh, 2015). The narratives within the Symbol Literacy approach contribute towards this notion. When children are told the story pertaining to a painting or manage to decipher the story themselves, through observation, they then get to discuss the message, feeling or emotion portrayed in the painting through a set of higher order questions or designed activities. With younger children the narrative is represented further through role playing and they also get to analogically reason the context in relation to their everyday life when they are asked to think about similar situations that they encounter at school or at home (Gellel, 2018b).

2.4.4 Symbol Literacy Activities through Rituals

As specified earlier, rituals form part of human's everyday lives (Bell, 2009; Cooke & Macy, 2005). Human lives are also constructed with traditional structured rituals, those that are related to society's procedures, such as, elections or commemorations (Bell, 2009). The Symbol Literacy approach tackles society's rituals as well. It should be noted that most of the symbol literacy activities make use of simple rituals that aim to highlight specific attitudes or knowledge. Yet, one of the activities which specifically assists individuals to familiarise themselves with the ritual is that which helps pupils to delve into the election of a new bishop. The

activity itself showcases the thought process that needs to take place for such a task to be successful. Furthermore, similarities and differences with the process of electing a new government in the country or a head of department in a company are also identified. Students are then encouraged to put such skills into practice by choosing a person from the present group that they think might qualify as a leader (Gellel, 2018b). The skills of silence and observation, along with the process of analogical and metacognitive reasoning, indirectly weave in with this activity since individuals have to be silent in order to reflect and think about the good qualities that their group mates have and then as a group, discuss and think about the instances where these qualities were observed. Lastly, the children create new life experiences that will aid them in their understanding and construction of new knowledge and reflection about values and personal characteristics that can be applied further on in their lives. This skill goes hand in hand with one of Efland's (2002) criteria where he pinpoints "how students monitor their own learning (i.e., metacognition) and how metacognitive strategies are learned" (p.78).

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed literature with the intention of exploring how human beings interpret and interact with the reality around them, including definitions from various agents in the area of psychology and the sociocultural field. Literature suggested that through interaction with other humans, the use of cognitive skills increases and acquiring of new knowledge becomes easier. Cultural gain was also discussed through the notions of traditions, rituals, symbols and art that are passed on through generations. The skills of silence and observation were noted in view of the manner humans subtly apply them to access and interpret such cultural aspects.

Given that the key question being tackled through the literature review examines whether the skills of silence and observation can be used as pedagogical tools to promote cognitive processing and acquisition of new knowledge, the following chapter will be investigating reality's interaction through the lens of young children and early childhood education and thus exploring whether such skills, when put in a

pedagogical context, promote cognitive processing and acquisition of new knowledge.

Chapter 3

Children's Reality, Formal Education and the Immersion of Silence and Observation

"You are gifted with virtually unlimited potential for learning and creativity" (Gelb, 2004, p.3)

3.1 Introduction

Chapters 1 and 2 examined the notions of silence and observation and how human beings interpret and interact with reality, even by using the skills of silence and observation. This chapter builds upon previous literature and explores young children's social reality, their interpretation of it, and interaction skills adopted to access the said reality in order to develop intellectually and humanely. In addition, this chapter examines young children's reality in mainstream education and looks into classroom realities in relation to cognitive growth, educational policies towards a holistic environment, and pedagogical approaches which, amongst other skills, foster positive silence and observation. This is done so as to provide an answer to the first research question of this study.

3.2 Early Childhood's Reality: Cognition

"A baby's ability to notice change depends on her ability to notice sameness, and that ability kicks in as soon as a baby is born" (Engel, 2015, p.23). In her book, Susan Engel (2015) speaks about how, initially, researchers used to think that babies acquire world related knowledge slowly. However, over the past half-century studies showed that as soon as babies are born, they sense repetitions fairly rapidly and are able to sort their experiences in a meaningful way to them. Engel (2015) argues that babies put their cognitive abilities into practice by spending the first two months getting familiar with the noises and visuals around them and therefore use most of the time by observing and/or attending to reverberations and to other human beings. Subsequently by the age of six months, babies start to familiarise

themselves with regularities in relation to occurrences, for example, banging on the table equals a particular sound. However, as Engel (2015) remarks, infants tend to "pause, change their breathing, and examine closely" (pg.25) when the said expectations are somehow altered. For example, banging on a table with a metal spoon, which obviously produces a different sound. This new aspect takes infants by surprise and hence they pause to silently think about what just happened and eventually try it out again and intensely observe the newly produced sound (Engel, 2015).

Through their study Tzourio-Mazoyer et al., (2002) confirmed that at just a few months of age, babies` minds own specific tissues tailored to equip the child for responsiveness towards "unknown woman faces" (p. 454). This interesting viewpoint can be linked to section 2.3, where symbols and their geometrical structures are examined. With reference to the circle, which normally represents life's completeness, Fontana (1994) states that, "babies are more strongly attracted to symmetrical, harmonious shapes than to unbalanced, uneven ones" (p.54). He adds that, "this preference may have as its source the symmetry of the human face, and the feelings of well-being and comfort associated with the parental face from an early age" (Fontana, 1994, p.54). This links to the fact that children live and form part of a sociocultural environment too. As Chapter 2 clearly outlines, the cognitive process of a human being cannot be constructed or measured upon an individual on its own but through the person's interaction and responsiveness to the stimuli around him (see for instance Vygotsky, 1921/1981; Valsiner & Rosa, 2007). Therefore, inspired by Engel's (2015) reflections, adults might ponder: What about this coating of reality for children? Which aspects of the sociocultural environment assist infant's cognitive skills and tickle their vigilance to novelty?

Initially, a baby might refuse to communicate and instead opts to embrace or tackle novel discoveries alone through observation skills and usage of the senses (Trevarthen, 2011). This is likely exhibited until the baby realises that when interacting with others, new discoveries can be made (Bruner, 1990). Unconsciously, a parent might introduce the idea of social interaction when, for example, the parent grasps an item that the child is playing with, puts it in a

different place and whilst moving it, makes playful sounds in a surprising manner. This instigates the child to laugh because of the surprise (Watson, in Trevarthen, 2011). Such a gesture will consequently boost the infant's confidence and also prompts the progression of imitation skills (Rogoff, 1995; Gelb 2004). Through these imitations, collaborative and/or shared learning starts taking place along with improved competence, confidence and sense of self – who I am and what I can do (Vygotsky, 1934/1987; Trevarthen, 2011; Gelb, 2004). Trevarthen (2011) explores the skills of imitation, as part of cognition and child development, by referring to his and Hubley's study. He shows how a mother's gesture influences and heightens an infant's cognitive skills. By first repeating a gesture multiple times, it allows the infant to observe, then through prompts and encouragement the infant is inspired to complete an action alone and eventually manages to confidently and solely complete the action without any prompts. This procedure boosts an infant's self-confidence and consequently leads the infant to alone start improvising and imitating gestures/tasks that also involve the use of items, as tools, to carry out actions such as using a spoon for nourishment (Trevarthen & Hubley, as cited in Trevarthen, 2011). This social interaction element corresponds with Vygotsky's (1933/1978; 1935/1982b; 1934/1987) concept, in relation to sociocultural development, and with specific references to the ideas that Fernyhough (2008) lists as *zone of proximal development* and *semiotic mediation*. According to Fernyhough (2008) the notion of ZPD "allows us to understand how caregivers have a role in 'packaging' alternative perspectives on reality in such a way that they can be readily assimilated by the children with whom they are interacting" (p.229). For this reason and thanks to the progress in research on infant's minds and cognitive abilities, beneficial theories about educating infants culturally and linguistically has, nowadays, a more scientific basis (Trevarthen, 2011).

Exposure to cultural heritage, symbols, rituals and traditions aid as well in enhancing children's reality and full interaction with the world they live in (Zittoun, 2006; 2017; Gelb, 2004). As stated by Gellel (2018b) "children are equipped with the ability to mindfully retrieve these symbols in order to make use of their meaning during various situations and stages of their life" (p. 110). Therefore, by engaging in these

cultural and rich opportunities, children will be sustaining an "early brain development", primarily with grown-up assistance and eventually alone (DeLoache, 1995, p.56). These situational opportunities, apart from fostering the abilities of silence and observation, give rise to vocabulary acquisition and improve communication skills (Slunecko, 2002). Moreover, these communication forms eventually assist in enhancing an infant's cognitive skills (Slunecko & Hengl, 2007). This is so since through the ability of silence, listening, observing and imagining, the infant relates to the narrative and therefore acquires new knowledge (Vygotsky, 1986). Linguistic growth of a child from birth to three years of age is distinctively shown through a child's developmental phases from communicating without words, to constructed language with an intimate group of people, leading to fully articulated speech that is recognised by all components of a particular society or culture (Vygotsky, 1934/1987; Slunecko & Hengl, 2007). Imagination also plays a role in this since when children "externalize their imagination in[to] language…[they] produce new meditational means that can transform self, others, and their shared sociocultural environment" (Zittoun & Glăveanu, 2018, p. 6). This concept can be linked with Romeo's et al. (2018) recent study that builds upon her previous research about the famous '30-million-word gap', published in 1995. The research showed that children who come from wealthy families are exposed to thirty million more words than those coming from a not so wealthy family. However, in her latest study, Romeo et al. (2018) show that the actual factor which enhances cognition and proper brain functioning is not the amount of words ditched into a child's brain but the amount of conversational shots, that is, talking with, not to, the child. In his handbook Wasik (2012) had noted that,

> some parents provide a strong foundation for language and literacy at home, having many print materials available and modeling the use of reading, writing, and math in daily life...[but] some parents, especially those with limited literacy skills or formal education, do not have the knowledge or skills needed to adequately support their children's early language and literacy development (p.3).

Romeo et al. (2018) defied the last part of Wasik's notion by showing that irrespective of the socioeconomical background, all parents are in a position to aid their child's cognitive development just by engaging with them on an adequate verbal level. This also contains reciprocal baby chatting since chatting demands

elaborated psychological skills than just speaking or listening (Romeo et al., 2018). It is also "the first study to reveal a direct relation between a specific aspect of language exposure, namely conversational turns, and brain function during language processing" (Romeo et al., 2018, p.708).

3.2.1 Early Childhood's Reality: Learning by Doing, Play and Creativity

Bruner (1960) believes that a child of any age is capable of understanding information if given the right amount of guidance. This goes hand in hand with Vygotsky's (1933/1978) ZPD theory which highlights, that through the use of stages, adults can guide a child's educational progression and hence assist him/her to socially interact with the surrounding environment. Bruner (1960) and Vygotksy (1933/1978) believed that a child has a lot of potential from the moment one is born. Gelb (2004) mentions this too when he says that "from birth…the baby's every sense is attuned to exploring and learning" (p.49). He also continues to say that the sense of *curiosita`* affects the nature of one's life and that "by cultivating a Da Vinci-like open, questing frame of mind, we broaden our universe and improve our ability to travel through it" (Gelb, 2004, p. 55).

When one is curious, one looks at a situation with an open mind and therefore asks a lot of questions, from various viewpoints, to gain more knowledge (Gelb, 2004). Children tend to add on to this by not settling only with the acquisition of new knowledge but by also actively involving themselves in the situation in order to learn more. They engage with learning as means of making meaning (Zittoun & Brinkmann, 2012). Consequently, the children's intellectual and cognitive skills develop since they engage themselves in learning by doing things. Van Wieren and Kellert (2013) assert that the development of these significant skills is positively influenced by outdoor nature environment. This shows how young children by nature are problem solvers and rarely seen in situations where they keep back from doing something because they lack knowledge about it. On the contrary, they delve into it and do their utmost to come up with a solution even if their knowledge is limited (Gelb, 2004; Zittoun 2017; Engel, 2015; DeLoache, 1995).

The Piagetian theory is one of the first that explores play. Piaget (1953) argued that play is an experience through which a child gains knowledge of something. Piaget also claimed that "as children get older, they reject the sillier games of childhood in favour of more realistic pursuits" (as cited by Cohen, 1993, p.2). However, Cohen (1993) disagrees with Piaget's theory since he believes that instead of concentrating on the social aspect, that is, how children react to the people around them, Piaget highlights how children react to object. Moreover, Bergen (2002) claims that "research has explored some cognitive components hypothesized to be strongly related to pretense, such as mental, representation ability (i.e., theory of the mind), problem solving and other cognitive strategies" (para. 3).

In this regard, "play is considered to be such an educationally powerful process that learning will occur spontaneously, even if an adult is not present" (Bennett, et al., 2001, p.1). It also helps children from a tender age to practice the skill of observation and if play involves interaction with other children, then the outcome is even better, as the child would have the opportunity to practice the skill further in order to integrate and socialise with the other children (Bennett, et al., 2001; Tassoni & Hucker, 2005). In addition, play makes children mentally alert and encourages them to observe, think and take decisions, thus enriching them with the necessary skills to face problems optimistically, knowing that they can be solved (Cohen, 1993). Wood (2013) argues that play is particularly important for creativity and imagination. It is an ongoing process that occurs throughout life, although the form and setting of play varies as a person grows older. Tassoni and Hucker (2005) illustrates this concept when saying that,

> babies play by exploring with their hands and feet, while a young child may dress up as part of pretend play. In an older child, play involves hobbies, games or leisure activities, and this type of play continues into adolescence and adulthood (p.1)

Furthermore, upon investigating the concept of imagination, Zittoun & Glăveanu (2018) connect it with sociocultural situations that one is faced with and say that "interactions with others and the world" contribute to the construction of imagination. Therefore, in relation to Wood's (2013) idea above, it can be said that the type of play engaged with is also connected to sociocultural experiences which

are brought about through observation.

The opportunities to learn through play for a child are immense and with careful intervention of an adult, as opposed to interfering, the learning experience can be fruitful and enjoyable, nourishing creativity, observation, cognitive processing and acquisition of new knowledge (Wood, 2013; Gelb, 2004; Zittoun 2017; Engel, 2015; DeLoache, 1995). These arguments pave the way to the next section, which will incorporate all concepts discussed so far, and explore how they can lead to holistic growth within the child if implemented simultaneously and providing the right environment.

3.2.2 Early Childhood's Reality: A Holistic Learning Environment

The online Cambridge Dictionary (2018) defines the word holistic as "dealing with or treating the whole of something or someone and not just a part." This blends in with how a young child accesses reality and the world around. Through play, social interactivity, emotional experiences, cultural interactions and morale experiences, a child's reality becomes a holistic one and the interesting part about it is that the child instinctively accesses all these together (Gelb, 2004). In her work Rogoff (1995) indirectly hints to the idea of holistic learning when talking about 'participatory appropriation' whereby she states that it is a concept "in which the boundary itself is questioned, since a person who is participating in an activity is a part of that activity, not separate from it" (p. 153).

As noted by Trevarthen (2011) young children create meaning from all types of animated encounters and expressions. In fact, from happy to catastrophic encounters, infants become pleased with the knowledge that they acquired and can actually remember it. Hence, they feel the need to continually want to communicate these new discoveries to the people around them and thereby they would also be contributing to the transmitted traditions, culture and rituals. Donaldson (1992) notes that in their primal years children usually broaden what she calls the 'human sense'. They do this through their insights of how to survive in the world. These insights, which go beyond differences in cultures, are learnt through real experiences that are lived every day thus developing their intellectual abilities.

Donaldson simultaneously links this developmental curve to emotions development and claims that emotions should be likewise cultivated because they are meaningful to the human being who felt them. She refers to this concept as 'value-sensing' and says that when emotions are part of an acquisition of new knowledge experience, children are more able to remember the acquired information since they actually make sense out of it, hence engage in holistic learning (Donaldson, 1992).

Through these experiences children come across symbols that help them access their reality and aid them in becoming holistic beings (see for instance Zittoun, 2007, 2017; DeLoache, 1995). Slunecko & Hengl (2007) referred to this in their writing by saying that we, as human beings are

> the results of processes, which lie above and beyond us, since we, as individuals, do not choose our cultural and linguistic formats and imprints. We rather find ourselves woven together with them in a net, within which we 'live, and move, and have our being' (p. 47).

This goes hand in hand with various studies in sociocultural psychology. Looking through Zittoun's work (2004, 2006, 2007, 2013, 2017), one can see how humans, from a very young age, directly or indirectly question or gather information about the symbols around them. This symbolic information is transferred and gathered into a person's symbolic repertoire/resource centre and that person does not necessarily use the symbolic information at that present time and reality. Instead one might use it in future situations or maybe not even use any of it at all. Zittoun (2007) refers to this idea by using the notions 'ruptures' and 'transition', whereby "ruptures in people's lives [are the] events that question what the person holds as taken for granted – and the subsequent process of transition" (p.348), hence the transfer of that information to a different stage in life.

3.3 Children's Reality and The Way Forward

Children have intelligence and different styles but if the environment is not rich enough or does not offer different possibilities, they would not be able to use their full potential (Snow, 1989). This ties in with Vygotsky's claim that the mind cannot be present aside from communal customs, hence the attention is not on the human

being per se but on the active human being (Minick, 1985). As previously discussed, during their infant years children exercise their creativity when playing. They make the most of their imagination and enthusiastically partake in communities by using their unique creative abilities (Trevanthen, 2011). Sadly, as Trevarthen (2011) continues to discuss, "this creativity of young children is often outside the imagination of those who are preoccupied with managing the complex artefacts and routine structures of the adult world" (p. 173) who instead give prominence to operative skills which are mostly associated with economic expansion (Ollin, 2008). Gelb (2004) refers to this when talking about creativity and creative problem solving. He states that "although we all started life with a Da Vinci-like insatiable curiosity, most of us learned, once we got to school, that answers were more important than questions" (p. 65). Unfortunately, since most schools focus on the same aptitudes instead of providing multiple opportunities, the child may find it difficult to reach his/her full potential (Snow 1989).

One person, who with his ideas in the sixteenth century has fuelled a non-holistic policy was Peter Ramus. He promoted the idea that the best way to teach children and communicate knowledge was by providing the information in parts, that is, each matter on its own and not as a whole or in a context (Gellel, 2018b). He also was in favour of textbooks and in fact "organise[d] knowledge in small pieces and develop[ed] textbooks accordingly" (p. 113). Ramus's proposals caused knowledge to be presented out of context and in fragments instead of promoting skilful know-how and cognitive processing (Gellel, 2018b). According to Craft (as cited by Ollin, 2008), even though heap criticism towards the traditional approach has been made, several teachers and schools still adopt a 'Peter Ramus' philosophy nowadays. Instead of using textbooks as tools to aid teaching and focus upon educating the child as a whole, educators are using books as a means to an end and feeding the child what's in the textbook, whether it is relevant to the child or not (Ollin, 2008). At this point the question about children being the agents in education and having their voices heard arises. Unfortunately "the possibility of real voice is caught up in a complex web of the power, exclusions, permissions, traditions and controls which weaken the prospect of the child's voice being heard" (Lees, 2012b, p 65). Ollin

(2008) talks about one of Vygotsky's (1935/1982a) theories, that of 'inner speech', which is sadly overlooked in the field of education in contrast to his other theories. This theory invokes the perception of a cognitive growth incorporate within one self, hence shifting the mechanism of social communication to one of 'silent' private dialogue which is internal and only vocalised when a person chooses to (Ollin. 2008). She continues to say that, as adults use their inner voice to reason on a more basic and fundamental level, such as questioning life's motives and wanting their voice to be heard, so do children and by providing them with a holistic environment which promotes positive silence and observation, they will be assisted upon finding the answers (Ollin, 2008).

Regrettably, the children's voice in education is being neglected. This leads to the use of negative silence whereby "teacher-talk [was] allowed to dominate [and thus] students [understood] that [total] silence is generally the appropriate mode for them" (Lees, 2012b, p. 63). Lees (2012b) continues to say that sadly agents in education are giving into the system, since educators are facing pupils who unfortunately are already aware of the 'passive drill' and "overturning this dynamic is [proving] difficult for both teachers and students, even if both parties would prefer to be speaking in conversation" (p. 63). Consequently, this is leading to a 'teacher-talk' environment which is in a way "shut[ting] down the students whilst demanding of the teacher a monologic style" (Lees, 2012b, p. 63) and ending up with,

> the teacher in authority…[who] often begins any conversation with the answer in mind, ready or primed to show the ignorant student their ability to teacher the 'truth' and how their own knowledge is superior. This silences students and stifles their curiosity (Lees, 2012b, p. 64).

Gelb's (2004) perspective aligns with this. He believes that "schooling does not develop curiosity…and question-asking skill. Rather, the thinking skill that's rewarded is figuring out the 'right answer' – that is, the answer held by the person in authority, the teacher" (p. 65).

Yet "today's children have inherited an unbalanced childhood agenda and lifestyle…rushed from one event to another…there is little time to do nothing or just

to be" (Haskins, 2011, p. 35). Gellel (2018b) discusses further and adds that,

> in a world where reasoning through an instrumentalist technological mindset prevails, where our experience of time and space have changed radically and where a sense of community is weakened, memory, meaning and the symbols that have been constructed and sieved through the centuries are being eroded. This is making it harder for children to access past wisdom, to participate in a rich process of meaning-making and thereby acquire a complete understanding of reality (p. 110).

This constant rush against time is leading educators to create a surrounding where 'listening' is being substituted with 'hearing' (Zimmerman & Morgan, 2016). Educators are not finding time to stop and communicate effectively and to find their identity through cultural roots (Gellel, 2018b). When speaking about Tarzan's story, Hybels & Weaver (2004) prompt individuals to recall that "our parents, our friends, and our teachers all tell us who we are through reflected appraisals – messages we get about ourselves from others… [which] help to create your self-concept." (p.36). However, even though stories and myths have always been a source of making meaning, in such a hectic world, a number of educators are not responding to the children in their classrooms, neither with discussions nor with stories or myths (Gellel, 2018b). Therefore, engaging in a serene and peaceful ambiance and adopting the tools of silence and observation is proving to be very challenging even when considering that certain relationship bondages are disintegrating through time (Haskins, 2011). Consequently, it is also proving difficult for adults to cultivate an environment of passing on knowledge through narratives and for children to acquire past wisdom through cultural capital and heritage (Gellel, 2018b). This fanatic world is demotivating educational agents and inclining them to "become skilled at identifying all of the negative reasons why a solution won't work before new ideas are even given a proper chance" (Gallagher & Thordarson, 2018, para. 4). It is indirectly promoting the idea of "'teach[ing]' or 'treat[ing]'…but not 'educat[ing]' with respect for the child's will to live and 'zest of learning'" (Trevarthen, 2011, p. 174). Thereby, education agents should better focus on amending the mainstream system to one that promotes children's engagement as agents and truly "celebrate each child" (Tobias, 1996, p. 113).

So what does literature promote as the way forward? According to Hyde (2008) and Haskins (2011) the education system should push forward and embrace qualities such as, silence, observation and non-doing, that provide time for children to comprehend life's value and significance which due to the inflow of technology and rapid life, are getting lost in the western culture. Thus moving away from "valu[ing] output more than inward-focused attention and valu[ing] intellectual progress over inner growth" (Haskins, 2011, p. 35).

Lees (2012b) emphasises the practice of positive silence. She says that silence thrives in educational settings where 'weak silences' are not prevailing and thus governed teacher talk and fury are unpopular. This can be sustained with Gelb's (2004) notion when his reply to "what makes a teacher great?... is the ability to help the student learn for himself. The finest teachers know that experience is the source of wisdom" (p. 77). Gelb (2004) links this to one of the Da Vincian Principles *dimostrazione*, since according to him it "is the key to making the most of" one's experience (p. 77). Furthermore, Haskins (2011) mentions that children, like adults, need quiet time to reflect and think over ideas and as Lees (2012a) promotes, this can be done with outdoor education since "in the outdoors silence is waiting for education as a curriculum of the self" and is worth leaving the school to encounter (p.8).

This leads to the concept of imitation and adequate modelling by teachers. According to Srinivasan (2014),

> students are reflections of their teachers, and the most important teachings we as teachers offer transcend academic skills and the acquisition of knowledge. Before teaching content, we must create a learning environment conducive to education. This begins by cultivating an inner sense of boundless love, so that we can receive students with warmth and create a classroom filled with peace (p. 26)

Children observe when teachers are peaceful and happy and model their behaviour and emotions (Kaiser Greenland, 2016). Thus, "a techniqued silence of meditation and mindfulness [that] goes hand in hand with a holistic approach [and] incorporates simpler and shorter applications of silence" (Lees, 2012b, p. 83) is advisable.

3.4 Emergent Approaches Towards a Holistic Attitude in Formal Education

A detailed overview of the didactics and ideology behind the Symbol Literacy Approach has been tackled in Chapter 2. However, in order to shed more light and provide further theoretical information to how, if silence and observation are used as pedagogical tools, cognitive processing and acquisition of new knowledge is promoted amongst learners, I shall be very briefly mentioning the philosophy and pedagogy behind two emerging early childhood education approaches – The Reggio Emilia Approach (Malaguzzi, 1993a/b; Cagliari et al., 2016); and The Mindful Schools Approach (Mindful Schools, n.d.). These approaches create a holistic learning school environment, make use of positive silence and observation skills and promote the idea of providing opportunities to young children to keep on accessing their primal reality and boost those innate skills in order to acquire new knowledge and ameliorate their cognitive skills.

3.4.1 Reggio Emilia (Italy)

Being considered, for over forty years, as a leading edge for early childhood education, the Reggio Emilia approach is mostly renowned for its forward-thinking perspective including children's approach towards knowledge construction (Rinaldi, 2006; Cagliari et al., 2016). Having Loris Malaguzzi as its founder, the approach is influenced by the works of various pioneers in the world of education, such as Vygotsky (Rinaldi, 2006; Cagliari et al., 2016). Referring to Malaguzzi's work, Rinaldi (2006) claims that the Reggio Emilia approach is child-centered precisely because it "start[s] from the children…[because] if we take away the child's ability, possibility and joy in projecting and exploring, then the child dies" (p.55). Malaguzzi (1993b) built his approach by viewing the child as "rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent, and most of all, connected to adults and other children" (p.10). Furthermore, he followed Dewey's philosophy of aesthetics and stressed on the importance of the environment viewed as the 'third teacher', along with the children and the educator (Rinaldi, 2006). In their article, Strong-Wilson and Ellis (2007) explore Malaguzzi's idea of the environment as a third teacher and say that

"the environment is much more than visual…[and that] educators can introduce 'provocations' meant to surprise children and spark discussion…[like] bringing in realistic objects for children to use in their play" (p.41/42). Howard Gardner in his forward to Edwards et al. (1998) book describes the Reggio system by saying that "it is a collection of schools for young children in which each child's intellectual, emotional, social, and moral potentials are carefully cultivated and guided" (p. xvi).

Incorporated in his approach, Malaguzzi (1993a) added the skill of observation. He spoke about the idea of 'becoming totally involved' and of 'discovering a new way of observing'. He emphasised its importance, claiming that 'it's possible to observe, to receive a lot of pleasure and satisfaction from observing in many different ways' and that if put into practice, it creates a happy atmosphere. Furthermore, he continues to say that the child wants true adult presence and not one 'who is distracted'. This relates to various concepts discussed along this literature review, namely the 'here and now' and the importance of 'listening'.

3.4.2 Mindful Schools (California)

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Mindful Schools assist teachers and school communities with endorsing mindfulness in the educational setting on a daily basis. They believe that to create a 'supportive environment for the children to learn and grow' it has to be one that allows children 'to breathe, to notice, to feel, to accept, and to care'. Through their practices they promote holistic learning and a holistic environment (Mindful Schools, n.d.). Vigder Brause (2018) wrote that during mindfulness sessions an educator "let the lessons unfold as the students explore themselves and their experience, to allow the students to be their own curriculum" (para.2). Furthermore, Metty (2016), the founder of *The cove school and With pause*, says that after spending "seven years of public school teaching, [she] knew [they] needed a radical shift to focus on the whole child…but moving in that direction took three pivotal shifts in [her] perspective [and] establishing a mindfulness practice served as the foundation" (para.1).

Apart from assisting schools to integrate mindfulness as a K-12 curriculum, Mindful Schools offer three main scaffolded courses based on the belief that an educator's

own practice serves as a model to the children's learning (Mindful Schools, n.d.). In fact, the first course titled 'Mindfulness Fundamentals' is a six weeks online course that introduces mindfulness mediation and helps an educator 'cultivate a personal mindfulness practice.' The second course titled 'Mindfulness Educator Essential' is a six week self-paced course where one learns how to 'integrate mindfulness using the K-12 Curriculum.' The third course titled 'Mindful Teacher Certification' is a one-year long certification programme that 'integrates the three core skills, personal practice, embodied technology, and curriculum delivery, thus supporting any educator to effectively adapt and deliver a mindfulness curriculum' (Mindful Schools, n.d.).

3.5 Conclusion

Through the works of Engel (2015), Gelb (2004), Zittoun (2007; 2017), Lees (2012b), Haskins (2011) and Gallagher and Thordarson (2018) amongst others, this chapter examined how children process, interpret and access their early childhood reality before commencing mainstream education. This highlighted how they acquire new knowledge and also make use of their cognitive skills. The chapter continued to examine the reality in mainstream formal education and how children's innate skills for intellectual development are being met. It also outlined the benefits of silence and observation skills as pedagogical tools, as well as, examined the work being done by agents in education towards a holistic approach in formal education. The emergent approaches of Reggio Emilia and Mindful Schools, which indirectly promote silence and observation skills as pedagogical tools for a holistic educational environment, were also outlined.

The literature reviewed in the first three chapters of this study seem to indicate that silence and observation can be used as pedagogical tools to promote cognitive processing and the acquisition of new knowledge. Literature has shown how by nature humans, including children, are holistic beings and thus interact with reality in a holistic way. It also showed that if positive silence and observation skills are used as pedagogical tools and therefore integrated in the mainstream educational curriculum, these will allow more space for children to creatively acquire new knowledge and also enhance their cognitive processing skills.

The next chapter outlines the methodology taken for the empirical study, in the attempt to answer the second research question proposed in this study. This will be followed by an analysis of the gathered data, a discussion, and a summary of the research findings including a list of limitations and recommendations, in light of the methodology and the literature reviewed along Part A of this study.

PART B

Chapter 4

Methodology and Design of the Empirical Research

"It becomes a tool for thinking about what the research will look like, components that may need to be present, and how the data could be collected and organised"
(Robertson, 2008, p.90)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter starts by giving an overview of research paradigms followed by the identification of the research framework chosen for this empirical study. The selected theoretical perspective will then be discussed along with an explanation of the methodology chosen for the design of the research. This chapter will then present an outline of the designed plan for this empirical study with references made to: population criteria, adopted procedure, data collection and evaluation tools, programme designed, and the technique adopted to enhance the skill of silence and observation. Lastly, it will explore the ethical issues taken into consideration which are relevant to research studies involving young children.

4.2 Research Paradigms and Philosophy

"Teachers investigating pedagogy through different ways of realising curriculum goals gave birth to highly effective curriculum and professional development" (Cordingley, 2015, p.237). When different educators viewed different philosophies, various standpoints began taking place. Educators started comparing their viewpoints with other philosophies and consensus was hard to reach. Educational research comes a long way and so does criticism towards it. The dispute that arose from the growth of educational research, termed by Gage (1989) as 'paradigms war', left a scar upon researchers in education. This 'war' gave rise to a change in educational research perspectives "from criticising whatever aspects of research did not fit the managerial paradigm, to praising the diversity of epistemic communities and the role of educational researchers as critical intellectuals" (Oancea 2005,

p.163). Consequently, such a move affected the intention of a research and gave rise to 'paradigm shifts', which as outlined by Watson-Gegeo (2004)

> questions all that we hold dear, all that we have assumed, the theories close to our hearts [and] the methods we have believed in. [Thus] such shifts shatter the old in the interest of making room for new growth and new visions (p.343).

Just as there are numerous opinions about research, there are fundamental key elements to research as well. Research in itself is quite methodical. This led educational researchers to gather a number of research techniques beneath contrastive paradigms. "A paradigm is a set of basic and taken-for-granted assumptions which underwrite the frame of reference, mode of theorising and ways of working in which a group operates" (Saunders et al., 2016, p.132). These paradigms are set into three assumptions: "about human knowledge (epistemological assumptions), about the realities [one] encounter[s] in… research (ontological assumptions) and the extent and ways… own values influence… [the] research process (axiological assumptions)" (Saunders et al., 2016, p.124). Hence prior to discussing competing research philosophies, one needs to differentiate these paradigms by analysing the distinction in the presumptions each carry out.

- Ontology deals with how things really are. Hence it "refers to assumptions about the nature of reality" (Saunders et al., 2016, p127). When doing a research project, ontology determines how one sees the world being explored, which may at first seem abstract to a novice researcher (Watson-Gegeo, 2004).
- According to Hofer and Pintrich (1997) epistemology focuses on how human beings acquire knowledge, their views about the said knowledge and how this knowledge might have an impact on their thinking and logic skills. Hofer and Pintrich (1997) also mention that an individual's epistemological growth and convictions is what mostly captures educational instructors and psychologists' interest.
- "Axiology refers to the role of values and ethics within the research process" (Saunders et al., 2016, p.128). This paradigm is sometimes referred to as methodology and aids a research project in making it more trustworthy (Saunders et al., 2016).

In order to compare these three types of assumptions and see how they fit within a desired research project one needs to be able to differentiate between them. Crotty (1998) suggests that there are three epistemological views – Objectivism, Subjectivism and Constructivism. However, as noted by Watson-Gegeo (2004), an epistemology based on sociocultural interaction emerged along the years and fought its right to be recognised as a verified epistemological view (Packer and Goicoechea, 2000). Although conflicts arose with constructivists, researchers sustaining a sociocultural standpoint kept on insisting that it is a total different view and that its concept advocates, "epistemological agents…[as] communities rather than individuals. In other words, knowledge is constructed by communities – epistemological communities – rather than collections of independently knowing individuals" (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, as cited in Watson-Gegeo, 2004, p.335). This goes hand in hand with Cole's (1990) views, whereby an individual is understood to be an integral part of humanity and culture. Using Lave and Wenger's perspective, Watson-Gegeo (2004) refers to education, stressed by sociocultural theories, as 'ubiquitous' and outlines sociocultural theory by expressing that,

> even our scientific instruments are an extension of our bodily capacities, and built on the assumptions we make about the nature of reality [ontology] and our way(s) of creating knowledge about reality [epistemology], and based on our body's ways of detecting and relating to the world. All cognitive processes are thus embodied (p.332)

4.2.1 Competing Philosophical Positions

Saunders et al. (2016) propose a research design model known as the research onion. The first layer of the research onion includes the philosophies that are adopted in a research project. With the aid of the research onion design a researcher understands that before arriving at the centre of the onion, one needs to start peeling off the outer layers first (Saunders et al., 2016). Hence, in doing so, one will be adding to the credibility and trustworthiness of his/her own research (Crotty, 1998). One must also point out that although research in education had its own 'wars', the philosophies are a constant no matter the subject being tackled (Saunders et al., 2016).

Every phase of a research process is grounded in the researcher's assumptions on the nature of knowledge. The selection amongst qualitative and quantitative research methods or amongst positivist and interpretivist research philosophies has conventionally been central to methodological discussions (Saunders et al., 2016). Nevertheless, lately, there has been an increase in the attractiveness of realism, pragmatism and sociocultural philosophies too. In fact, "dominant ways of thinking about social phenomena have been defined through distinct theoretical positions" (Pring, 2004, p.90). Normally, research in education has a broad spectrum of philosophies, but for this study four competing philosophical positions will be examined, these being: positivism, realism, interpretivism, and socioculturalism.

4.2.1.1 Positivism

"The name which historically is most closely associated with positivism is Auguste Comte" (Pring, 2004, p.91). Positivism highlights the presence of a mutual reality which individuals can approve of. It argues that these realities are significant as long as they can be observed, and verified (Pring, 2004). The ontological assumptions supporting positivism are relevant to the presence of autonomous phenomenon outside the mind and are mainly portrayed through objectivism. Positivists demand that researchers regard ideas as real and impartial so as to be valid. Hence "in making any claim, one knows what kind of evidence would verify or falsify what is said" (Pring, 2004, p.93). Epistemologically one would set attention on determining observable evidences and truths. Within this framework the researchers would make every effort to disconnect themselves from what is being researched and separate themselves from the people under study so as to reduce bias (Saunders et al., 2016, Crotty, 1998).

4.2.1.2 Realism

At times, the philosophy of realism is confused with a more intense form of realism that supports the positivist philosophy, that is, direct realism. Contrastingly, critical realism holds the philosophy that what we perceive and encounter might not be the actual truth, hence complete reality (Saunders et al., 2016). From an ontological point of view, realism is quite layered and realists view what is real as impartial or

external while pinpointing how often we are misled by our good judgments (Saunders et al., 2016). With realism, the method of teaching aims at grasping skills through proof and evidence. Researchers with this philosophy in mind focus on studying logic, critical thinking and the scientific method. The material planned is scientifically tackled and in-depth situated experiences are held. Most researchers hold considerable in-depth research methods such as observations, because it is only through observations that one is able to comprehend occurrences in the social context once a thorough understanding of the social context and structure is held (Saunders et al., 2016).

4.2.1.3 Interpretivism

Interpretivism arose after the harsh criticisms towards positivism, mostly because the social element had been neglected. Unlike positivists, interpretivists are interested in how humans access the world around them and how they interact with each other (Saunders et al., 2016). “Interpretivism emphasises that humans are different from physical phenomena because they create meanings” (Pring, 2004, p.140). In this regard, interpretivist researchers deal mostly with qualitative rather than quantitative methods. From an ontological point of view, interpretivism deals with subjectivism since it sees reality as a related item (Saunders et al., 2016). For the interpretivist, reality is an interaction which attends to the impact that the knowledge gained in a society through involvement leaves on the identity and behaviour of an individual (Packer and Goicoechea, 2000). The epistemological viewpoint of interpretivists is of a social philosophical nature having researchers fully involved in the project rather than isolating themselves from the research (Saunders et al., 2016, Crotty, 1998).

4.2.1.4 Socioculturalism

According to Markus and Hamedani (2007), this philosophy sets forth the concept that human beings and their reality depend on each other and are considered to be collectively examined. There is no specific process for this philosophy but instead an approach of association between the society and the individual is highlighted (Markus & Hamedani, 2007). A clear description of this philosophy is featured by

Watson-Gegeo (2004) saying "that cognition originates in social interaction and is shaped by cultural and sociopolitical processes. That is, cultural and sociopolitical processes are central, rather than incidental, to cognitive development" (p.332). This corresponds to the works of Bruner (1990) who argues that there is more to the human mind than just the human being. Various researchers, such as, Valsiner and Rosa, 2007; Zittoun, 2006, 2007, 2013; and Slunecko and Hengl, 2007, have contributed through their work in order to strengthen sociocultural psychology. In addition, when talking about the works of Bruner and other psychologists, Markus and Hamedani (2007) portray how a sociocultural philosophy combines 'meanings', 'representations', 'situations' and 'acts', amongst others. This continues to give credit as to why the philosophy behind sociocultural psychology is appropriate especially in relation to educational studies that hold a holistic view. This philosophy also accredits the work of Vygotsky (1933/1978) and his theory of ZPD, which once again promotes a holistical dimension towards the education of an individual and sees development as a combination of the human being's personal voice and the notions socially acquired. Furthermore, in her article Goos (2008) also mentions Valsiner's zone theory of child development that is also related to sociocultural philosophy since it accredits the notion that an individual's holistic education is effected by the participation of different human beings and the surrounding environment. This ties with the educational and holistic concepts reviewed in Chapter 3 and with Markus & Hamedani's (2007) work which associate the philosophy of sociocultural psychology to the "culture as tools" approach (p.21) and claims that individuals, from different cultures, may not arrive at the same solution to a particular situation since solutions are constructed upon the knowledge gained within the related culture/society.

The research questions being explored in this study are:

(i) Can silence and observation be used as pedagogical tools to promote cognitive processing and the acquisition of new knowledge?

(ii) If silence and observation are pedagogical tools, in what way do they help the child to process, interpret and access reality?

Following are the reflections made, in order to be able to respond to these questions taking also into account the literature that has been reviewed in the first three chapters.

4.3 Epistemology Chosen and the Empirical Research Framework

According to Edwards (2003), since its beginning, thoughtful ideas and growth theories concerning the inception of knowledge were the foundations upon which the 'early childhood curriculum' (p.262) has been set up. She speaks about the impact that Piaget's philosophies had upon the curriculum foundations and the disputes raised throughout the years, in relation to which philosophies to educate infants are best suitable. Edwards (2003) further mentions that "continued investigation into children's development and learning has seen an increased emphasis placed on the sociocultural nature of development, with work by Vygotsky (and later Rogoff) serving to further inform theoretical debate and discussion about early childhood curriculum" (p.262).

Given that the nature of this empirical study deals with young children's acquisition of knowledge, cognitive processing and interpretation of reality, it can be concluded that ontology and epistemology are connected for the sake of this research. This is so because the research in itself tackles the process of children socially acquiring new knowledge and applying it as their own life philosophy hence transferring it as a vision of how they look at the world being explored and access that reality. All this leads to the creation of an association between society and the individual which, as previously explored, together promote cognition. The whole process reflects a sociocultural viewpoint. In other words, this project will particularly focus on the sociocultural perspective since it is able to locate in an ontological process which attends to the impact that the knowledge gained in a society through involvement leaves on the identity and behaviour of an individual whereas in constructivism the personality and knowledge of the person is overlooked (Packer and Goicoechea, 2000). At times research is not viewed as hypothetical but as engaging relationships with others. As noted by Schunk (2012), "students who collaborate to solve problems become aware of new ways that knowledge can be used and combined,

which forms new synaptic connections" (p.66). When studying the various interpretations of reality, I always tend to take Wertsch's (1995) stance that experiences are made and created in synergy with the students and that understanding is generated with respect to others. In this view this study calls out for a methodology of an auto-ethnographical approach in the form of qualitative research since I do not perceive understanding and knowledge as a defined quantity but as an evolving activity. Put differently, true socialisation is built while interacting with others (Valsiner & Rosa, 2007).

Consequently, an epistemology of a sociocultural nature within the framework of a qualitative methodology was embraced. Furthermore, to complete this research I chose to take on a collaborative action research method with participant observation since I believe that it helps teachers investigate their own practice in a new way, taking a closer look at not only the children but also themselves (McNiff, 2002). Additionally, the procedural paradigm and analysis structure will adopt a sociocultural historical activity theory. Within these perspectives Figure 4.1 depicts the research framework that I shall be adopting for the second and empirical part of this study that will eventually address the second research question.

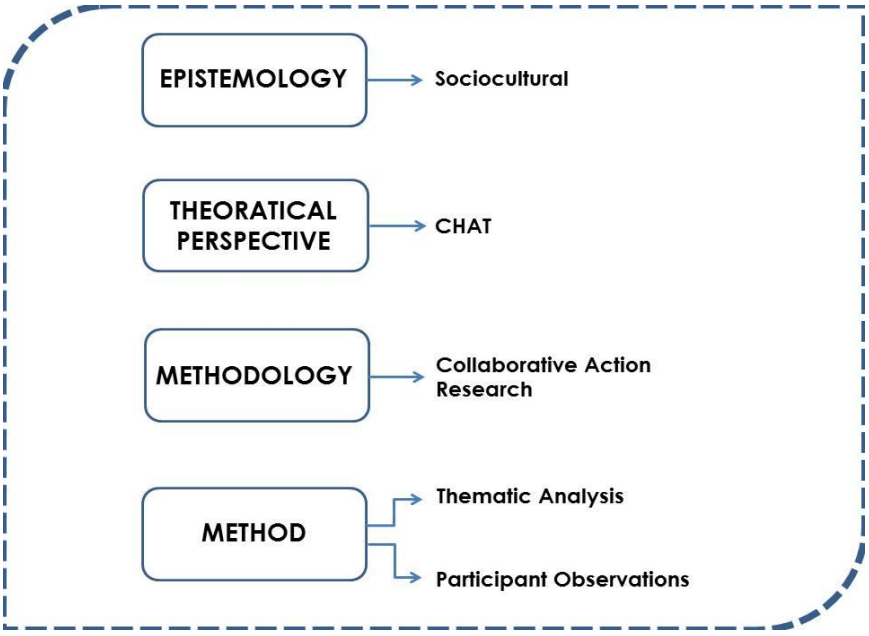

Figure 4.1 Research Framework

4.4 Towards the Research Design

Robertson (2008) makes the analogy of qualitative research as a journey, a process in itself, from planning to the destination stage. In his words "combining the functional nature of a map with the power of computer-based software (GPS) can lead to a fascinating trip filled with many memorable moments" (p.81). He implies that a mixture of traditional methods and computer software, to gather and analyse data, makes a qualitative research richer. This and the subsequent sections delve into the research design adopted for the second part of this dissertation, the empirical study, in view of attempting at answering the second research question "if silence and observation are pedagogical tools, in what way do they help the child to process, interpret and access reality?" In a nutshell, the study will be conducted with two kindergarten 1 classes, their respective educators and the three to four year old children in their classroom. One of the classes, to which no treatment will be given, will only serve as a control group while children in the experimental group class will experience positive silence and an emphasis on the skill of observation. Three outdoor activities will help me understand whether silence and observation allow children to access reality in a different way. The study forms part of a collaborative action research practice and data is gathered through participant and naturalistic observations. In addition, a qualitative approach is adopted given that the whole study is seen as a lifelong process and a journey rather than a means to an end (Robertson, 2008). These design factors will be explicated at greater length in the following sections.

4.4.1 Theoretical Perspective

From a theoretical perspective, I chose sociocultural historical activity theory (CHAT) in order to "understand the complex human learning situation that can be observed in a natural setting" (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p23). This is because I perceived it as an inspirational beneficial instrument for this study and inquiry. Additionally, I chose to focus on Vygotsky's (1921, 1981, 1934/1987) and Leont'ev's (1932, 1981) work on the theory.

This theory, which was developed by Engeström (1987), builds on Vygotsky's (1921, 1981, 1934/1987) first generation theory of mediation "where he maintained that

human beings as agents react to and act upon mediating objects of the environment such as tools, signs, and instruments leading to an outcome" (Nussbaumer, 2012, p38) and on Leont'ev's (1932, 1981) work on CHAT. Kaptelinin and Nardi (2006) summarises the work of these two psychologists when stating:

> The first idea asserts that the mind emerges, exists, and can be understood only in the context of the subject–object relationship. The second idea claims that society and culture are not external factors influencing the human mind but rather generative forces directly involved in the very production of the mind (p.66)

For Kaptelinin et al. (1995), the idea that activity is not a secluded matter is evident. The term activity in itself indicates the notion that, someone is engaging in performance. This performance then becomes related to something specific resulting in the idea that within the individual's surroundings there may be items with which s/he can connects. Kaptelinin et al. (1995) continue to argue that for activity theory "activity mediates interaction between subjects [agents] and objects [things]" (p.191) and pursue it with a detailed description of what, according to them, the Activity Theory basic principles are, "includ(ing) object-orientedness, the dual concepts of internalization/externalization, tool mediation, hierarchical structure of activity, and continuous development" (p.191).

The first principle is related to 'object-orientedness', that is, the perspective of Activity Theory on the character of objects that individuals relate with. A debate arose about how, in this concept, an 'object' is actually seen, that is, as just an item (Marxism) or holistically (Leont'ev), as a collection of artifacts, which in themselves are a mediation, transformation and re-creation of culture with the latter receiving more consensus (Valsiner and Rosa, 2007; Scribner, 1997).

The second basic principle dealt with the distinction "between internal and external activities" (p.192). The notion that, for both activities to be comprehended they cannot be detached when examined, due to common shifts amongst them, is significant to Activity Theory. Consequently, "it is the general context of activity (which includes both external and internal components) that determines when and why external activities become internal and vice versa" (p.192). Therefore, it

depicts internalisation as the shift of an activity from external to internal and externalisation as the shift of an activity from internal to external.

As hinted above, task build-ups, tools bearing cultural beliefs, attitudes and morals are reconstructed and developed contemporaneously (Vygotsky 1921, 1981, 1934/1987; Leont'ev, 1932, 1981; Valsiner & Rosa, 2007). External and internal impressions, most often derived by the surrounding tools, affect one's behaviour and attitude, therefore mould an individual's approach of how one connects with reality. The third principle of Activity Theory, 'tool mediation', is influenced by the previous two concepts. "The use of tools is a means for the accumulation and transmission of social knowledge" (p. 192). Tools refer to both the tangible, physical element and the intangible, nonphysical element. This idea and the following ones are interrelated with the literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3. Intangible tools such as, communication and behaviour, speech and type of words used, and cultural norms, rituals and traditions, can be considered as mediations in activities (Slunecko & Hengl, 2007; Duveen, 2007; Cole & Engeström, 2007; Vygotsky, 1986; Luria 1981). Summed up, once these tangible and intangible tools are acquired, they are transferred to an individual's symbolic repertoire and become available as potential symbolic resources to be used by the individual when related life activities are encountered (Slunecko & Hengl, 2007; Zittoun 2006, 2007; Gellel, 2018b).

The fourth principle tackled is the 'hierarchical structure of activity' (Leont'ev, 1932, 1981). This structure, matured by Kaptelinin and Nardi (2006), and depicted in Figure 4.2, shows how "activities are composed of actions, which are, in turn, composed of operations (left). These three levels correspond, respectively, to the motive, goals, and conditions, as indicated by bidirectional arrows" (p.64).

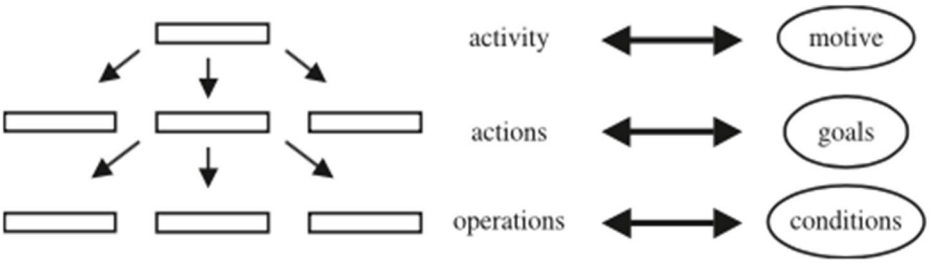

Figure 4.2 The Hierarchical Structure of Activity

(Kaptelinin and Nardi, 2006, p.64)

Actions level are at the centre of the structure which transform into goals. This make, actions/goals equivalent to the concept of object, in Vygotsky's basic CHAT model. Moreover, with regards to the hierarchical structure, following the goals level, one reaches the motive level which is the highest point in the hierarchy and the purpose of the entire activity. Kaptelinin and Nardi (2006) specify that human beings, existing in a concrete environment, have basic needs that can only be achieved if they do something about it. In this theory, "activity refers to a specific level of subject-object interaction…[thus] a motive… [is] a system of process oriented toward the motive" whereby "a motive is an object that meets a certain need of the subject" (Kaptelinin and Nardi, 2006, p.59/60).

The fifth and final principle of Activity Theory is that of 'continuous development'. "Activity Theory sees all practices as a result of certain historical developments under certain conditions and as continuously re-forming and developing processes" (p193). Therefore, when a researcher examines the interaction of individuals with the reality around them, s/he should base it upon the notion of human cognitive growth. This also relates to Zittoun's (2004, 2006, 2007) theory of transitions, explained in detail in previous chapters.

The following subsection represents a detailed CHAT framework, based on Vygotsky's, Leont'ev's and Kaptelinin and Nardi's work, as proposed in relation to this empirical study.

4.4.2 CHAT as a framework for the pedagogical tools: silence and observation

It is essential to note that this framework weaves in with the theoretical work examined in the literature review and thus can be seen as the link between Part A and Part B of this dissertation. Furthermore, it correlates with the methodology of the Symbol Literacy Approach, also reviewed in Chapter 2, for which the skills of silence and observation are among the pedagogical tools used.

The central question to this research is 'in what way can the pedagogical tools of silence and observation be used by the children as a tool mediation to process, interpret and access reality?' For this reason, 'mediation through artifacts', as Cole and Engeström (2007) calls it, or as previously labelled 'tool mediation', is an important factor for this study. The two main techniques chosen for this particular study to be used as mediated tools are silence and observation. These have been primarily chosen with the intention to help enrich the young children's ability to increase their symbolic repertoire. In addition, it will hopefully provide the possibility to identify in what way they used the symbolic repertoire to process, interpret and access the reality (activity) they will be interacting with. However, these techniques are not solely used. Other tangible and intangible artifacts, that are relevant to the two main pedagogical tools, are also used as mediated artifacts. Some of them are based on Kaiser Greenland's (2016) model and are discussed in more detail in section 4.6.4 of this chapter.

Among the tangible tools that are chosen for this study, one can find, a singing bowl, a candle, tingsha cymbals, a pendulum, speakers for calm music audio files and short music videos with relaxing images. On the other hand, among the intangible tools, one can find the skills of: positive silence, observation, focusing, balance, reframing, cooperation, insight, and compassion. The children are made aware of these tools and their notions through in-class activities and use of the tangible items. As mentioned in the previous section, classifications of communication and behaviour, speech and type of words used, and cultural norms, rituals and traditions were indirectly applied to the study. Through the in-class activities, values or skills

pertaining to the above classifications were practised thus passed on to the children and augmenting their symbolic repertoire. It is important to acknowledge a crucial element that was carefully taken into consideration throughout the whole empirical study. Qemuge and Inner (2008) mentioned the factor of using "the teacher's behaviour as the model example (since children) frequently and unconsciously imitate them" (p.83). This key element is closely associated with the literature reviewed in Chapter 3. This was something that, together with the collaborative class teacher and learning support educator (LSE), I kept in mind and discussed throughout the whole study. Having the teacher already an active practitioner of positive silence and sustaining it as a life philosophy was a gift to this study. Thus in a way, consciously and unconsciously, modelling adequate and positive practice of silence and observation skills, including all their components, became a mediated tool in itself.

The cultural, social and historical beliefs that most of the tangible and intangible chosen tools encompass, added value to the mediated tools. The singing bowl is one example in this study of a tangible artefact that mediates communication and behaviour of positive silence. The knowledge that "written transcripts (about singing bowl usage were) composed over 1,000 years ago (and) their (usage) for healing in the Himalayas (and) as meditational aide in India" (Nur, 2013) added to its worth. Along the same lines, the type of mediated words used in this study, such as, stop, breath, look and listen, strengthens the application of observational skills as a mediation tool. According to Cole & Engeström (2007)

> culture is present in the form of the tools, signs, rituals, and so on that mediate human activity. It is simultaneously present in all the symbolic forms that have accumulated over the social group's history, whether that history is of long or short duration (p. 486).

Hence the use of mediated tools provided to the children in this study will also indirectly become part of their culture.

The activity theory principle of internalisation and externalisation is also strengthened in this study, through age appropriate activities. An example of internalisation used in this study is the concept of 'seeing', that aids in recognising

the best approach or manner to use in a situation prior to actually exhibiting it externally (Kaptelinin et al., 1995). On the other hand, an example of externalisation used in this study is the concept of 'reframing' that helps in a situation when cooperation from various individuals is needed. Thus for optimal teamwork it becomes a necessity to externally perform one's actions or activities (Kaptelinin et al., 1995). Furthermore, the framework for this study tackles also the fifth principle as discussed by Kaptelinin et al., 1995, that is, 'development'. The activities carried out with the children, apart from fostering the skills of silence and observation, also grant them the opportunity to, and encourages cognitive growth. Notwithstanding all this, the fact that children come to school already with pre-constructed knowledge, could not be ignored (Vygotsky 1933/1978; Zittoun, 2004, 2006). The tools that the children might have already acquired from family and society and thus already placed into their symbolic repertoire, were also kept in mind.

This brings me to the developed CHAT framework adopted for this study, which is depicted through Figure 4.3 below. It encompasses the notions of Vygotsky, Leont'ev and Kaptelinin and Nardi and views the 'activity', defined by a 'motive', as the 'essential unit of analysis' (Cole & Engeström, 2007). The actions/tools are the tangible and intangible tools mentioned above which will be mostly presented through in-class activities and usage of the tangible items. These aid in the delivery of the goals, which include: 'learning how to use positive silence', 'learning how to use observation skills', 'learning how to focus and direct attention', and 'learning the concept of reframing including when and how to use it'. They will help to move up in the hierarchy of goals to arrive to the activity/motive of helping children to access and interpreting reality through the use of silence and observation. This should amplify children's cognitive development.

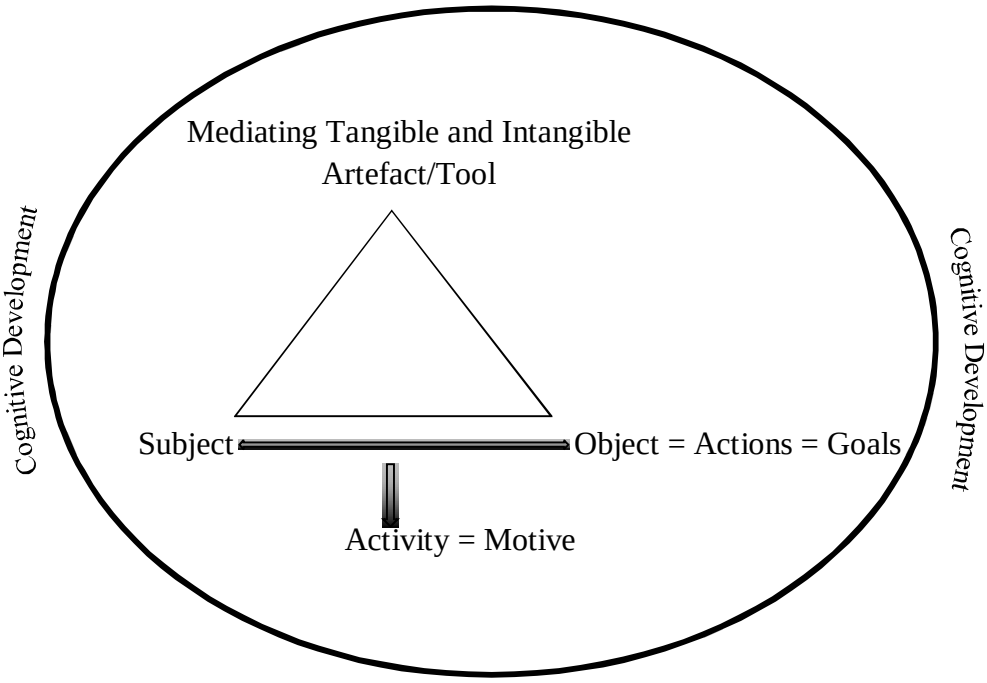

Figure 4.3 The Developed CHAT Framework

(based on Vygotsky's, 1933/1978, Leont'ev's, 1981, and Kaptelinin & Nardi's, 2006 ideas and influenced by Cole & Engeström, 1993)

4.5 The Research Approach: Methodology Chosen

After being herself involved in the Symbol Literacy project, Ms Angie[1], who makes use of the skills of positive silence and observation with her class, approached me. In the last three years I supported Ms Angie through my line of work and as a result I also became familiar with the school environment where she teaches. In her observations, related to silence and observation skills, she noted considerable improvements and has therefore asked me to help her, through my research, to further develop this pedagogical approach and to investigate in a systematic manner the benefits that children get from silence and observation. At the same time I was aware that there are innumerable variables that may influence the outcome of the study, including, but not limited to, the children's aptitudes and development, the class teacher and the school environment. For this reason I decided to include another kindergarten class, under the responsibility of Ms

[1] This pseudonym will be used in the study for the teacher of the experimental group.

Emma[2], who does not use positive silence as one of her pedagogical methods, to serve as a control group, whilst Ms Angie's class, will serve as the experimental group.

As a result, this study calls for a collaborative action research project, applies a quasi-experimental design. Given the nature of the research, it also makes use of a convenience sample. As mentioned earlier, this will call for a qualitative approach and will be expressed through participant and naturalistic observation.

4.5.1 Action Research

Action Research is similar to an inquiry made by a professional. The professional is determined to improve his/her own practice with beliefs that are fair and address the situation directly (Kemmis et al., 2014). This research approach is vital since it enables the teacher to facilitate and maximise the learning experience of the students and of other teachers. Furthermore, it allows teachers to have the chance to empower themselves and show the importance of their role in relation to university research and curriculum development and hence become directly involved in the process of making positive changes (Kemmis et al., 2014).

> The knowledge you create is knowledge of practice. These questions therefore arise: What do I need to know about action research? Why do I need to know it? What else do I need to know to help me do a good project? (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010, p.7).

From an ontology point of view, action researchers accept as true the fact that people are able to construct their own characteristics and give room for others to construct theirs (McNiff, 2002), while from an epistemological point of view "action researchers see knowledge from their experience of living and learning" (McNiff, 2002, p.18). Lastly from an axiological point of view action researchers understand their projects as chances for development and wisdom through their various encounters with other individuals of the same mind frame (McNiff, 2002).

[2] This pseudonym will be used in the study for the teacher of the control group.

The action-contemplation spiral process that includes planning, acting, observing and reflecting, depicts the methodology required as part of the action research (Lewin, 1946). Stenhouse (1975) worked upon this spiral method and argued that within this method, teachers were not stimulated to clarify their own commitment for making an effort to improve their practises. "It was possible to generate E-theories about educational practices from observing how teachers behaved within their own classrooms…[but] no one yet spoke of the need for anyone to produce personal accounts of practice" (McNiff, 2002, p.44). Also, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) expanded on Lewin's spiral process however their model did not allow room for freedom of movement in the research project. Work on action research methodology was also conducted by Elliot (1991) and Whitehead (1989). Whitehead's approach went "beyond dominant E-approaches. He adopt[ed] rather an I-approach, which encourage[d] practitioners themselves to produce their own descriptions and explanations for their own learning" (McNiff, 2002, p.54). Various other researchers contributed towards this methodology, such as, Jean McNiff (2002) who came up with her own version of the action-reflection spiral process. She stated that:

> it was important to put in the action-reflection steps, something which many people have rightly criticised over the years, saying that this was too prescriptive. I now have the courage of my own comfort in insecurity to present an image of non-definitive fluidity (McNiff, 2002, p.57).

Lewin (1946), Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) and Mcniff (2002) developed a slightly different action research framework, however they all follow a similar process. This involves the 'planning' stage, whereby a researcher may brainstorm with colleagues in order to help focusing on an appropriate research question (McNiff, 2002). It is then followed by the 'acting' stage whereby the research design is put into action and researchers monitor and document the data throughout the whole process (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010). Subsequently, the 'observing' and 'reflecting' stages are administered, whereby the process of interpreting and analysis begins by identifying the major issues and the final stage leads the researcher to reflect thus stimulating further investigation and questioning (McNiff, 2002).

4.5.2 Qualitative Research

"Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3). In this study the classroom environment and the outside locations used for the fieldwork activities may be considered as the natural settings. In addition, the methods in which silence and observation are used as pedagogical tools that help the child to process, interpret and access reality may be considered as the phenomena. This leads to Kim's (2015) concept that by its very nature the data collected throughout a study evolves into a narrative and that same narrative evolves into data. Due to this, the whole study is seen as a process rather than a structure. Thus, my aspiration is that this study will be an ongoing journey for the children even after the study ends.

Goodliff (2013) refers to these "narrative texts [as] vignettes" (p.1063). Bruner (1986) mentions that the buildup of the narrative itself gives a holistic picture of the activity along with the nature and dimension of the surroundings. These perceptions were an important consideration for this study since it is a naturalistic one. Apart from other narratives, the narratives of the three main outside fieldwork activities in this study were other ways of showcasing the manner in which children access and interpret reality.

In addition, this view highlights the concepts of fact and value. As cited in Griffiths (1998), Elbaz notes that:

> reality is assumed to be a homogeneous, consistent and non-changing phenomenon that can be verified…The division between fact and value does not allow for the complexity of our sociality. A fact is already an interpretation: interpretation is sine qua non to the possibility of language and communication (p.49).

Denzin & Lincoln (2000) indicate that using only a God's eye view to fulfill a methodology is dated. When one tries to understand the reality around him/her, it is natural that interpretations are created. Therefore, it is important to note that the interpretive approach in this study gives rise to concerns of an ethical nature, which will be reviewed further on in this chapter.

4.5.3 Participant Observation

According to Becker and Geer (1957)

> participant observation provides a situation in which the meanings of words can be learned with great precision through study of their use in context, exploration through continuous interviewing of their implications and nuances, and the use of them under the scrutiny of capable speakers of the language (p.29).

Participant and naturalistic observation is the method selected for this research. This is preferred to interviews on two grounds. First, when interviews are involved, one would have to deduce or assume ideas which could have been easily been observed had the researcher been in such possible situation (Becker & Geer, 1957) and second, when considering the tender age of the participants involved in this study and their vibrant approach towards learning, participant observation looks more appropriate for gathering all the details of data. Although participant observation is not the only valid method when dealing with a sociological fieldwork, according to Becker and Geer (1957), the surveillance of occurrences in a situation is suggested to provide a full documentation and insight of the situation. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) mention that, the traditional procedure of qualitative research recommended that researchers go into the field, become detached from the subjects and present an objective report. On the other hand, since I chose to work with agents that are familiar to me, the schools chosen, the teachers and the outside locations, this study reflects the modernist moment of 'the golden age' as labeled by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), which is that of field selection.

4.6 The Plan for this empirical Research: Method Chosen

Bruner (1960) mentions that "the intellectual development of the child is no clockwork sequence of events, it also responds to influences from the environment" (p.39). Silence and observation are skills and habits of how to relate with reality and new knowledge. They can be a way of being sustained through the practices of the school and class (Kaiser Greenland, 2010). For this reason, it would have been useless to devise an experiment that would only last for four to five weeks since it would not capture the long term effects of an approach that would hopefully become rooted in the children's way of interacting with their surroundings.

4.6.1 Participant Population Criteria

This study comprised two professional teachers and mixed gender children who, were in the classes of the two participant teachers during the scholastic year 2017-2018. The inclusion criteria for the collaborative and prospective teachers were:

i. Teacher Training Qualification (B.Ed (Hons) ECEC)
ii. Teachers who are responsible for a KG 1 class

In both classes there were fourteen, three to four year old, mixed gender children. Although students attended school in a different building and location, both schools are homogenous and pertain to an allied school organisation.

As hinted earlier, since this study was part of a collaborative action research project with Ms Angie, having her, as the teacher of the experimental class, an active practitioner of positive silence and observation indirectly became a criterion too.

4.6.2 Procedure

Ms Angie provided the children in class (E), the experimental group, diverse opportunities in order to grow in the skill of silence and observation – to be silent and listen, and to be silent and observe. She conducted a short silence or observation technique every day, explained in detail in section 4.6.4.1, from November till mid-March. I made sure to observe the class once a week and kept field notes. Ms Angie was also given an observation sheet (Appendix 7) that allowed her to report on the children's ability to make use of silence and observation skills as well as infer their effects on their processing ability. Furthermore, she was also given a journal diary (Appendix 9) to record her own reflections and observations throughout the whole study and she also acted as a co-researcher.

No similar activities were conducted with the children in class (C), the other kindergarten class serving as the control group. This should not lead anyone to think that these children were being deprived of any educational programme since this class teacher has never adopted this educational approach.

A timeline and outline of the whole study will follow. Reference can also be made to Figure 4.4, found at the end of this section. Furthermore, for a complete outline of the evaluation tools used to gather data and analysis, reference can be made to section 4.6.3.

- Upon clearance from the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) board in November 2017, I sought permission to conduct my research in schools from the Secretariat of Catholic Education (Appendix 2), then from the head of school of the two respective schools (Appendix 3e, 3c). Following this, I handed out the information letter and consent form to the two respective teachers (Appendix 4e, 4c) and once this was sought, I handed out the information letter and consent form to the parents/carers of the children in both classrooms (Appendix 5e, 5c). Subsequently, I went to speak to the children and informed them about the study, using clear and uncomplicated words, and gained their consent through the assent form (Appendix 6e, 6c). Once all this was in place, the research could start.
- Before starting any in-class activities (second week of November 2017), I took both classes (C+E) on a separate outdoors fieldwork activity (Outing 1). The location and date was the same for both classes. The base ground of the location was of a countryside nature where the children had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the new environment. This correlates to what Van Wieren and Kellert (2013) stated in their research whereby they believe that "even in the modern world an aesthetic value of nature promotes human physical, emotional, and intellectual health and well-being" (p.261). Furthermore Lees (2012a) claimed that "silence has a profound relationship to the outdoors and it also has a significant relationship to education" (p.1). Locations chosen were secluded thus eliminating the possibility that the children would already be familiar with the place. This was done so as to eliminate any prejudgements, feelings or attachments with the place. In addition all locations offered the same surroundings mostly including, grassland, trees, wild flowers, soil, small stones and rocks and various small creatures and their habitats, such as, insects and bugs. Once at the desired location the children were left free to

roam around (under appropriate adult supervision) for an hour. In the meantime, I observed their interaction with the environment and noted my observations using the fieldwork observation sheet (Appendix 8). Data on this activity was also gained through photograph and video recording. The teacher and Learning Support Educator (LSE) were advised to keep their interaction with the children to a minimum so as to reduce the possibility of influence and thus the children will truly act freely. This was done so as to gain information related to how at the present moment children were processing, interpreting and accessing reality.

- Till mid-December 2017, no intervention was made to the class (C) group. Meanwhile, I handed out the Observation Sheet (Appendix 7) and Journal Diary (Appendix 9) to Ms Angie and the children in class (E) engaged themselves in moments of silence and observation. This provided the children with a gradual growth in the skill and attitude of silence and observation. During this time, I visited the class and observed the activity once a week and kept field notes. This helped the children and me to get to know each other and also helped me become a familiar face to them.
- During the 2nd Term (January – mid-February 2018), the children in class (E) continued working on the same technique with Ms Angie. This was supplemented with Part A of the designed programme, (Refer to table 4.2 in section 4.6.4), where the children engaged themselves with various silence and observation simple games.
- Towards the middle of the research, (mid-February 2018), we took the children in class (E) on another outdoor fieldwork activity (Outing 2). Since "early childhood is a rapid period of brain growth" (Kuther, 2017, p171) this was taken into consideration and thus in order to diminish the interference of this factor with the study, the intervals between all the outings was kept to a minimum. Furthermore, the objective of the fieldwork and organisation was the same as that of Outing 1, however the chosen location was again new to the children. It was similar to the previous one yet offered a different experience. The only difference was that before being left to roam around freely, the children engaged in a five to ten minute silence and observation activity (refer to table

4.2 in section 4.6.4). Data of the children's interaction with reality was once again gathered through the fieldwork observation sheet (Appendix 8) and through photo and video recording. Also once again no intervention was made on class (C) during this period.

- During the middle and end part of the research, (mid-February – mid-March 2018), the children in class (E) continued working on the same technique with Ms Angie. This was supplemented with Part B of the designed programme, (refer to table 4.2 in section 4.6.4), where the children engaged themselves with more silence and observation simple games. One observation in-class game entitled 'Not a Box' was held with the children in class (C). This was done to gain insight on the cognitive processing of the children and to observe their imagination and thinking skills. Notes were taken through video recording.
- At the end of the research, (mid-March 2018) both classes (C+E) participated in the last outdoors fieldwork activity (Outing 3). This was the last fieldwork activity with both classes and the new location still offered a countryside experience. The same objectives and organisation were kept as the other two outdoor activities, apart from the initial activity of class (E), which once again started with a five to ten minute silence and observation activity (refer to table 4.2 in section 4.6.4). Children in class (E) were also asked to give their views about the silence and observation activities done this year. Data of the children's interaction with reality was again gathered through the fieldwork observation sheet (Appendix 8) and through photo and video recording.

At the end of the process I discussed the notes and observations with Ms Angie, being a co-researcher, to gather further insight in the children's educational development. Ms Angie wrote her final reflection about the study in her journal diary whilst Ms Emma was asked to write a short reflection about her notions on the part of the study in which she participated. In depth analysis of the gathered data followed as explained in section 4.6.3.

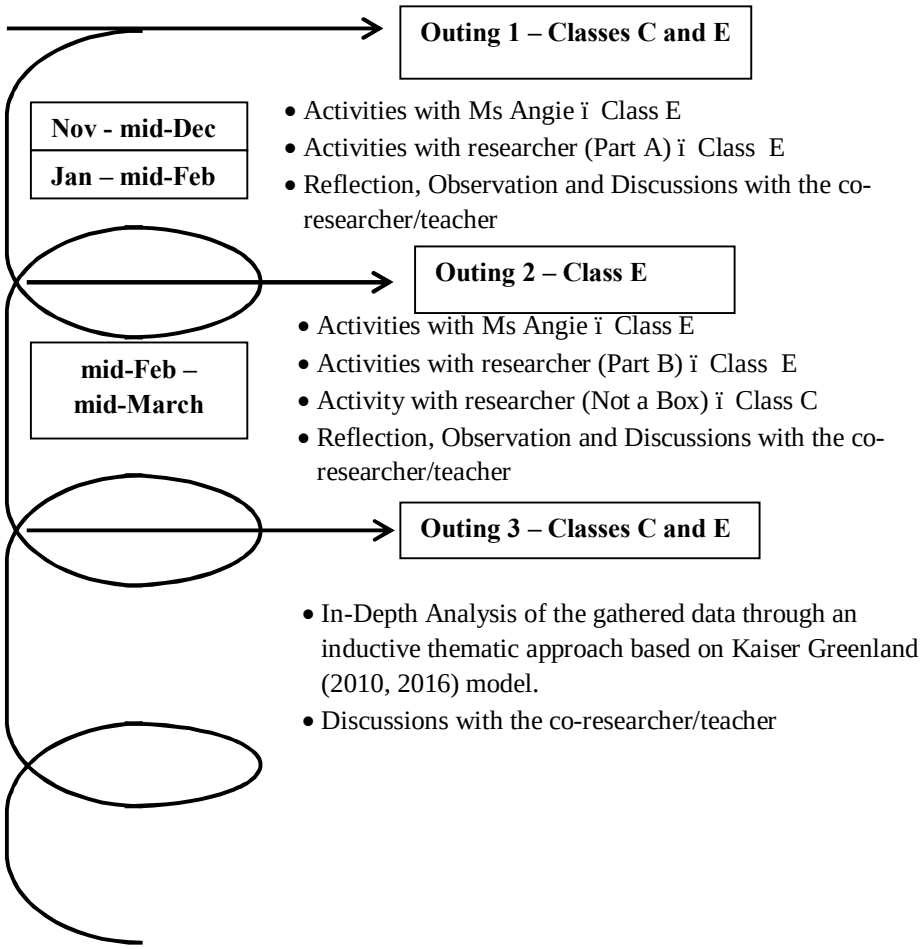

Figure 4.4 Timeline and Outline of the Study

4.6.3 Data Collection and Evaluation Tools

Data was collected during the first and second scholastic term 2017-2018. Table 4.1, depicts the way data was collected. The first phase of the project (November – mid-December) included the two pre-outings (class C+E) and in-class activities with Ms Angie. The second phase of the project (January – mid-February) included the second outing with Ms Angie and in-class activities with Ms Angie and myself plus the implementation of Part A of the designed project. The third and last phase of the project (mid-February – mid-March) included in-class activities with Ms Angie and myself plus the implementation of Part B of the designed project, one in-class activity with Ms Emma and the last two outings (class C+E) as an end to the project.

	Data Type						
Activity	Audio Files	Observation Sheets	Still Digital Images	Video Recording	General Reflection	Reflective Journal	Field Notes
Outing 1		✓	✓	✓			
Activities Ms Angie		✓	✓			✓	✓
Designed Project Activities (Class E)				✓			✓
Outing 2		✓	✓	✓			
Designed Project Activities (Class E+C)				✓			✓
Outing 3		✓	✓	✓			
Childrenôs Perception	✓						✓
Teacher Behaviour				✓	✓	✓	

Table 4.1 Methods of Data Collection

After conducting all the activities and observations, during the last phase of this study, I sought to do an in-depth analysis of the growth in the skills of silence and observation between all the in-class activities held with the children in class (E). Furthermore, I intended to analyse and compare, the skills used by the children in class (E) to process, interpret and access reality, along with the quality and time of process, to those used by the children in class (C) using the three outings and thus examine whether the skills of silence and observation served as pedagogical tools

with the children in class (E). In addition, I analysed the teacher's behaviours in both classes. This was done through an inductive and thematic approach. The inductive approach is where one arrives at new generalities from observations and does not depend solely on previous knowledge (Gabriel, 2013). Since the global structure pertaining to this study still requires more inquiry and research, an inductive approach seemed more suitable. In addition, as stated by Robertson (2008), "harnessing the power found in traditional methods of data collection and organisation teamed with new possibilities found in emerging technologies, can expand the potential insight gained through the research process" (p.82). Thus I used a mixture of both. Procedures with regards to coding contained the assortment of narrative transcripts and field notes. These were manually developed and through the computer software NVivo which provided the opportunity to theme code data.

4.6.4 The Designed Programme

According to Kaiser Greenland (2016),

> a growing body of scientific research supports what contemplatives have known for centuries: mindfulness and meditation develop a set of life skills that allow children, teens, and parents to relate to what's happening within and around them with more wisdom and compassion (p.1).

Kaiser Greenland (2010, 2016) based her ABC theory (Attention, Balance and Compassion, see Figure 4.5) on classical meditation practice that nurture the domains of attention, wisdom and values. She exhibits them using a curved layout placing the skill of 'focusing', at the heart of it all, since for Kaiser Greenland (2010) stable attention is of assistance to the rest of the skills.

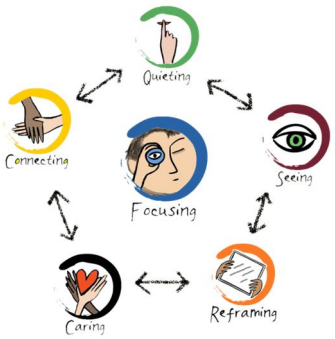

Figure 4.5 The circle of six life skills

(Kaiser Greenland, 2016)

She describes how these six skills are 'scaffolded' given that shifting attention (quieting, focusing) moves to shifting emotional balance (seeing, reframing), hence moves to and ends with shifting compassion (caring, connecting). This implies assisting the children "rather than focusing on the result, [to] focus on responding to [a] situation with wisdom and compassion" (Kaiser Greenland, 2016, p.2). The flow of these skills also depicts a shift from self-awareness towards awareness of others. As clearly noted, all of these skills indirectly align with Lees's (2012b) notion of positive silence, explored in Chapter 1, and hence assist children to foster the skills of positive silence and observation as well as access the seven elements of mindfulness as referred to by Reddy (2014). The practice is also enhanced with Snel's (2013) "straightforward, imaginative and accessible to children['s approach]" of 'sitting like a frog' (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p.ix). Through Figure 4.6, I am representing the indirect relation of positive silence and observation skills to Kaiser Greenland (2016), Reddy (2014) and Snel's (2013) work. Furthermore, Table 4.2 depicts the detailed programme (used during the second term), set by Ms. Angie and myself. Together, we set the skills of silence and observation as pedagogical tools, using both Ms Angie's silence technique and the delivery of the mini activities based upon and linked to the work of Kaiser Greenland (2016), Reddy (2014) and Snel (2013). A brief explanation of the activities can be found in Appendix 10. It should also be noted that each activity session mentioned in the programme (Table 4.2) started with Ms. Angie's silence and observation technique and in addition to the candle, the children were also introduced to the 'singing bowl' and 'tingsha cymbals' as mediating tools.

4.6.4.1 Ms Angie's silence and observation technique

Ms Angie's technique involved the same routine. This helped the children become accustomed to silence and observation activities gradually and without difficulty. She usually engaged the children with the session first thing in the morning after having settled in and after having immersed themselves in some time of free play. Over time, as soon as she uttered the words 'clean up', most of them knew that the silence activity would follow and after cleaning up they would get their cushions, place them in a semicircle and sit down on them. Miss Angie always made sure to set the right mood by switching off the lights, pulling down the blinds and switching on adequate music to help the children interconnect with silence. She would then light a candle, which she places on the floor in the middle, and sit on a cushion herself facing the children. Together they would listen to the music, with eyes closed or not, and remain in silence. At times, she would also play a short video with relaxing images and the children observe the images in the video. Following this, they would recite a short thanksgiving praise and engage in conversation, either about what they observed in the images seen or their observation about topic chosen by the children or Ms Angie. In every activity, the children led the amount of silence and observation employed. This notion will be viewed, analysed and discussed in the coming chapters.

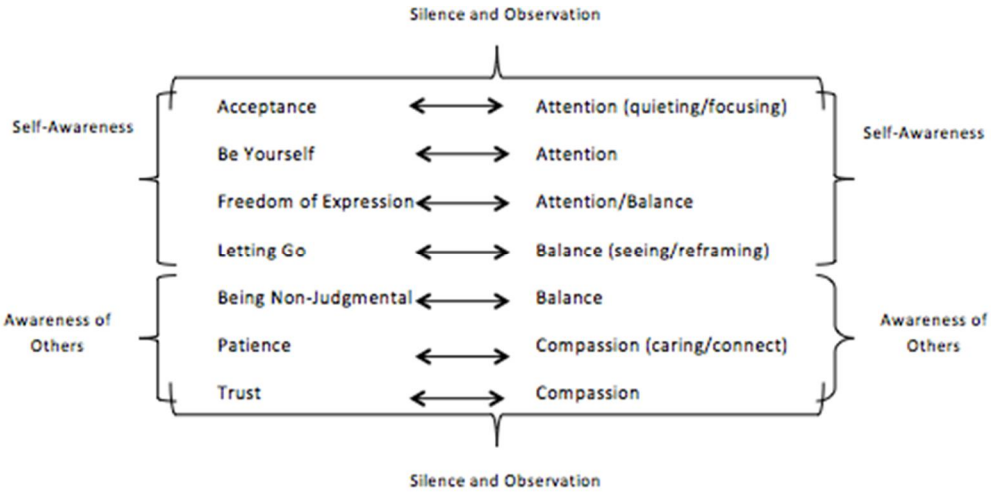

Figure 4.6 Connection of positive silence and observation, the 'six life skills' and the seven elements of mindfulness

(based on Kaiser Greenland, 2016, Reddy, 2014 and Snel, 2013)

PART A		
Week/Session Number	**Target**	**Activity Name**
Week 1.1 (15-21)	**Quiet** (silence & observation)	Sitting still like a frog
Week 1.2	**Focus** (silence & observation)	Fading Tone + Tick Tock
Week 2.1 (22-28)	**Seeing** (silence & observation)	What did I hear + Book[3]
Week 2.2	**Reframing** (silence & observation)	Duck, Rabbit
Week 3.1 (29-4)	**Caring** (silence & observation)	Imaginary Hugs
Week 3.2	**Connecting** (silence & observation)	Your own bubble + Hello
Week 4.1 (5-11)	**Quiet** (silence & observation)	Zip Up
Week 4.2	**Focus** (silence & observation)	Rock a Bye + A Handful of Quiet[4]
Week 4.3	**Seeing** + **Reframing** (silence & observation)	Thank the farmer
Week 5.1 (12-16)	**Caring** (silence & observation)	Food Activity Break
Week 5.2	**Connection** (silence & observation)	Pass the Pulses + Sending Wishes
Week 6.1 (19-23)	**OUTING (2)**	Listening Walk + Slow and Silent Walking

PART B		
Week 6.2	**Quiet** (silence & observation)	Shake it Up
Week 6.3	**Focus** (silence & observation)	Stop, Feel my Breath + Jar
Week 7.1 (26-2)	**Seeing** (silence & observation)	Mystery Box
Week 7.2	**Reframing** (silence & observation)	Not a Box[5]
Week 8.1 (5-9)	**Caring** (silence & observation)	Kindness Bracelet
Week 8.2	**Connection** (silence & observation)	Stadium Wave
Week 9 (12-16)	**OUTING (3)**	Sinking Pebble + Special Star

Table 4.2 Detailed Programme

(based on activities from Kaiser Greenland, 2016, Reddy, 2014 and Snel, 2013)

[3] ñSilenceò by Lemniscates (2012)

[4] ñA Handful of Quietò by Thich Nhât Hanh (2012)

[5] ñNot a Boxò by Antoinette Portis (2011)

4.7 Ethical Issues and Clearance

In designing my research I was very much aware of the ethical issues and dilemmas that might arise when conducting research with very young children. For this reason I consulted current literature on the subject (amongst which Flannery Quinn & Manning, 2013; Powell et al., 2012; and Robson, 2011). The issues of truth and validity where brought about by the approach of narratives. One might ask, how can a researcher be sure that the narratives are a legitimate echo of the children's hands on practices? The collection of gathered data through vignettes in this study, depicting children processing, interpreting and accessing the reality around them, is in a way led since most of the time I watched out for indications of silence and observation. These included obvious indicators, such as, closing of eyes for a span of time, staring, abrupt turning of head in the direction of a heard sound, stopping or sitting down alone for a span of time. Hence, the process of data collecting was, to a certain extent, discriminatory but at the same time in the eyes of the observed information, these activities still had a natural flair to them since they formed part of a normal everyday school practice.

Another notion that raises an ethical issue is the process of interpretation. For a researcher adopting a qualitative and narrative approach, interpretation is core to formulate meaning. Having the words 'help the child to process, interpret and access reality' included in this study's research question, shows a factor of understanding in itself. As Kim (2015) puts it "we analyse narrative data in order to develop an understanding of the meanings our participants give to themselves, to their surroundings, to their lives, and to their lived experiences" (p. 189). However, this still raises questions about the dominant standpoint of a researcher in relation to the participants in the study and as to how a researcher manages to defend him/herself from emotional bias. Having a totally unbiased research is quite impractical since human beings are socially shaped and consciously or unconsciously every gesture or decision taken carries some form of preconception with it (Vygotsky 1933/1978, Zittoun, 2004, 2006). Notwithstanding, Wagner (1997) argues that it is now customary that researchers recognise their impressions on the research and by doing so one enhances trustworthiness and credibility.

As already mentioned, I sought ethical clearance from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) and the UREC (Appendix 1). According to Cree et al. (2002), when a research involves children, agreement from various 'gatekeepers' should be acquired. Thus, I requested the permission from the Secretariat of Catholic Education and from the respective schools. Information letters to the respective early childhood educators, including informed consents and parental permission letters were also provided (Appendix 4e, 4c, 5e, 5c). Information was given to the pupils in the teachers' classrooms. The main salient points and issues of the study were verbally explained to the children using their first language, Maltese, and were also translated to English for those who required it. Included in the salient points tackled was the fact that I as the researcher, was going to be with them during the outings and in-class activities and that I will be observing them during all the activities. Furthermore, I requested the consent from the children themselves by having them draw over an emoji (Appendix 6e, 6c). In this way I fulfilled my obligation towards them since by doing so I demonstrated "that children are active participants in their own learning" (Kinney & Wharton, 2008, p.3). I also made sure that the children did not risk any harm, be it physical, psychological, legal or social and that they were kept safe at all times, most especially during the fieldwork activities taking place outside the classroom. I viewed the three different places used for the outside activities several times making sure that they all offer safe grounds for the children to be in.

In early childhood research it is normal to make use of video recording data since this helps the researcher to better elicit information from children (Moran & Tegano, 2005; Kroeger & Cardy, 2006; Robson, 2011; Powell et al., 2012; Flannery Quinn & Manning, 2013). Robson (2011) states, "a particular advantage of using video data is its potential for capturing rich data" (p.187). Given that pre-school children are still in a process of developing their verbal capabilities it becomes extremely important to take note of physical gestures, facial expressions and concrete actions that the individual child and the community of children use (Trevarthen, 1979; Bavelas, 1994). Trevarthen (1979) claims "study of these patterns requires repeated analysis of videotapes or films or sorting of many

photographs. Since it is impossible to attend adequately to several parts of the body in real time, pencil and paper or keyboard encoding from ongoing behavior are unrealistic" (p.330). Robson (2011) also supports this by saying that "video can be a valuable means of eliciting children's perspectives, different in scope to other methods and possibly of particular benefit in research"(p.187). Hence, I needed these recordings, so that I may truly 'listen' to what the children have to say. I clearly informed all 'gatekeepers' that the recordings will solely be used for in-depth note taking only. In my application for ethical clearance I also specified that I will take specific measures to minimize the risks as much as possible and to respect the children's and parents'/guardians' agency. While it is true that "a major challenge [with video recordings] is to ensure participants' anonymity and confidentiality (since) 'raw' recordings may leave settings recognizable and children may be wearing distinctive school clothing" (Robson, 2011, pp.184/187), I pointed out that I took this into account have no intention of publishing any photos or video recordings. I only used them for in depth note taking thus respecting and guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity to the participants. Furthermore, "ethics statements frequently stipulate that data will be destroyed after the final writing up of a project" (Robson, 2011, p.185). This was also acknowledged and was made known to all "gatekeepers" too. Lastly, during the in-class activities I tried my very best to position the camera at a very subtle angle so as not to be intrusive.

The rights of all the participants were taken seriously, namely:

- The right to freedom of voluntary participation in the study,
- The right to opt out of the study at any time,
- The right to privacy and confidentiality,

I also protected the people involved in the study by using pseudonyms when referring to my field notes hence providing confidentiality and anonymity. Besides, participants were regarded as real people at all times and always treated with respect**.** This was enriched through a relationship with all participants built on trust and confidence. Additionally, I made sure to continually assess and re-assess whether the students were comfortable with the research. The data gathered was

on normal educational practise and had no change in curriculum or assessment. On the contrary, the pedagogy used augmented the students' entitlement to a holistic and meaningful education thus all students benefitted even those who do not give their consent. The difference in this was that those whose consent was not given were not included in observations and retrieval of data. However, I must say that this was not the case in this study since all participants gave their consent. It is also important to note that the research process was discussed with a colleague who acted as a critical friend and who was able to offer me diverse viewpoints.

At the end of the study, a detailed record of the work will also presented with this study for transferability, dependability and confirmability. Therefore, I conclude this section by proceeding with the analogy made by Robertson (2008), "of qualitative research being a journey, [thus] these tools help you initially plan the trip as well as identify meaningful excursions to be taken during the trip, which enrich the experience" (p.90).

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I displayed the constitution and essence of this study and the idea behind choosing a sociocultural epistemological approach. Furthermore, I pondered upon the ideal approach to instigate the children in using the skills of silence and observation as mediating tools as well as the noteworthy procedure with regards to ethical involvement with children. I also explored the model/philosophy upon which the designed in-class activity programme was built and the notion of how it will also be used as an inspiration to elicit the criteria upon which the data collected will be represented and analysed.

In the next chapter a report of the data collected, analysis and discussion, inspired by the theoretical perspective framework and Kaiser Greenland's (2010) model will be given.

Chapter 5

Data Results, Analysis and Discussion

"Nature as raw encounter is an introduction to where silence comes from. Silence comes from the source of ourselves" (Lees, 2012a, p.8)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will analyse the data gathered from field notes, observation sheets, video recordings, digital images, audio files, reflective journal and general reflection, mostly in connection with the second research question of this study. However, the whole analysis also serves as a link between Part A and Part B of this study. After discussing several tasks and procedures at the beginning sections of the chapter, the analysis will focus on six main themes all related to the two key concepts of silence and observation. Subsequently, a discussion of the main research findings that emerged from the study will follow, in the light of the academic literature reviewed and the two research questions.

5.2 Approach towards Data Interpretation

"Interpreting data involving real-life interactions in a natural setting can be overwhelming because the information that is relevant and essential to the study and that which is not are all in the data set" (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 26). In order to access meanings from qualitative raw data, a thorough process of analysis needs to be undertaken in order to form written material (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). As hinted at in the previous chapter, the analysis process in this study followed the transcription of the video recordings held throughout the study. Furthermore, each mode of data collection, ranging from video recording to field notes was given a code of reference. This is represented in Table 5.1 below. Additionally, each specific activity held during the study was also given a reference number in ascending order as a link to the date on which the event took place.

In order to conform to ethical procedures of anonymity, each child was given a code made up of his/her initials followed by either the letter M or F (male/female) to help with gender identification. In addition, I will refer to myself as NC, to Ms Angie as MA, Ms Emma as ME and the learning support educator in both classes will be referred to as LSE.

Data Type	Code of Reference
Field Notes	F.N
In-class activity video transcript	I.V.T
In-class activity observation sheet	I.O.S
Reflective journal	R.J
Audio Files Transcript	A.F.T
Fieldwork Video Transcript	F.V.T
Fieldwork Observation Sheet	F.O.S
Digital Images	D.I
General Reflection	G.R

Table 5.1 Code of References

5.2.1 Emerging Themes

Most data was analysed using a mixture of the traditional manual methods and online software. The software NVivo, apart from providing me with the opportunity to theme code the data, assisted me to search easily through the data, to keep record of the arising themes and to organise the data. All vignettes (transcripts) and digital images were imported to the software and every significant notion from the data was then coded. Notions from notes, which were hand written such as field notes, were manually coded. In accordance to Van Manen's (1990) work, the

emerging themes were in some way inspired by my way of thinking and by Kaiser Greenland's (2016) model upon which, as shown in Chapter 4, the in-class programme was based. Van Manen (1990) mentions that these themes are like 'knots' in our lives. They are a network through which one may be guided in the process of investigation. Furthermore, he portrays the themes that emerge from studies, that include an analytic system, as 'fasteners or threads' (Van Manen, 1990, p.91). Notwithstanding, along the inductive process, new generalities (nodes), in relation to the study, emerged. These were mainly those of emotions, awe and wonder, questioning, imitation, imagination, creativity and teachers' behaviour. Therefore, upon additional exploration it was apparent that from the eighteen nodes that emerged, some of them could easily be merged together and later grouped under the two key notions of silence and observation. From Figure 5.1 one can note the six new main themes in relation to the two main key notions. Furthermore, another distinctive yet related theme emerged, that is, the teacher's behaviour.

Some of the themes were presented to the children as skills with the intention and aspiration that they use them and potentially enrich their ability to increase their symbolic repertoire. Through the next section I intend to explain my definitions of the emergent themes so as to better clarify the concepts.

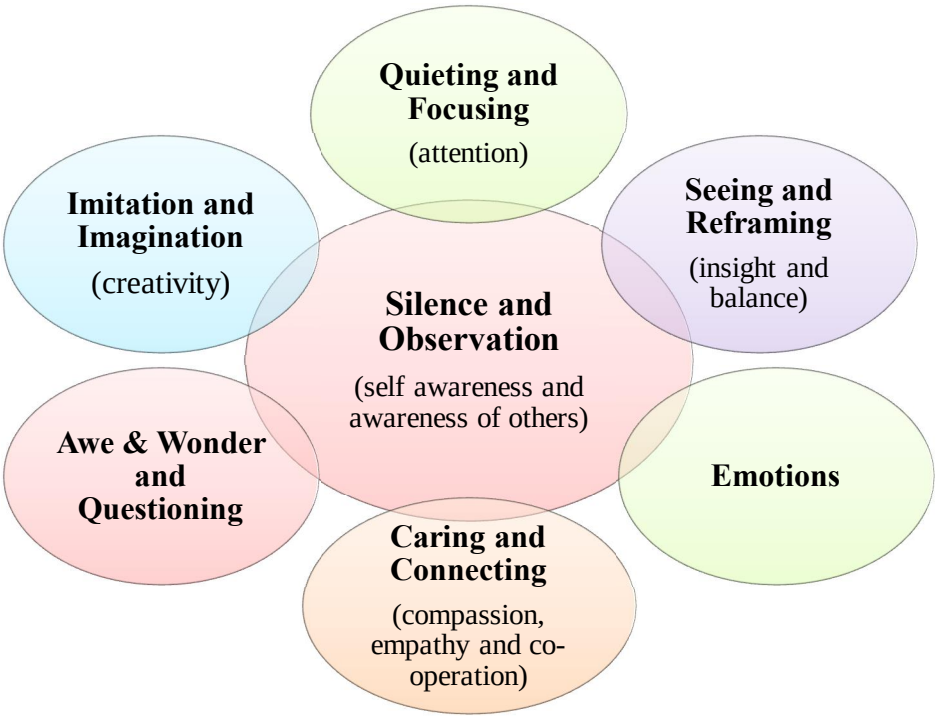

Figure 5.1 Emerging Themes

5.2.2 Pre-Definitions

These pre-definitions, displayed in Table 5.2, are made in order to situate my understandings, as the researcher, in relation to the concepts being explored in this study. The definitions are based upon the works of various authors amongst whom, Kaiser Greenland's (2010; 2016); Zittoun and Gillespie (2015); Zittoun and Glăveanu (2018); Lees (2012a/b); and Caranfa (2004; 2010) are found.

Nodes	Related Node/s	Definition
Quieting		Relating with peace and calmness
Focusing	Attention	Placing attention on something and hold it for a bit
Seeing	Insight	Perceiving something innately
Reframing	Balance	Keeping the same facts but shifting point of view

Emotions		Showing up of feelings
Caring	Compassion, Empathy	Responding with kindness and imagining how a person might be feeling
Connecting	Co-operation	Watching, listening, attaching, interpreting and responding to other peopleôs view in order to understand them and making them feel understood
Awe & Wonder		Astonishing feeling and curiosity
Questioning		Giving and receiving knowledge
Imagination	Creativity	Make-believe using the given surrounding
Imitation		Emulating a person or an action/object

Table 5.2 Pre-Definitions

5.3 Themes Results and Analysis

The analysis of each theme depicted in the coming subsections will first be presented in relation to the in-class activities held with the children in class (E). This will provide the possibility of observing the development in the skills of silence and observation. Subsequently, with regards to the three fieldwork activities, an analysis and comparison of the skills used by the children in class (E) and class (C) will follow. This will help me determine if the skills of silence and observation served the function of pedagogical tools with the children in class (E).

An outdoor natural environment was chosen for the fieldwork activities relating to Lees's (2012a) notion that "outdoors education is privileged when it comes to

curricula experiences of silence because nature is, I suggest, the source of silence" (p.1).

5.3.1 Quieting and Focusing as part of silence and observation

According to Lees (2012b) "silence as a feature of a school landscape can offer the transcendence of the intellectual, but without destruction of the possible importance of the intellectual" (p.111). Silence, observation and mindful practices highlight the concept of experiencing life in the present moment. As children grow older they are able to grasp the concepts of time and space and thus are able to speak about past experiences and to relate them to present and future experiences (see for instance Hay and Nye, 2006 and Champagne, 2003).

5.3.1.1 In-Class Activities

When analysing data from I.O.S, I.V.T and F.V.T, I noticed that whereas at the beginning of the study, in the first weeks of November, the children employed two minutes of silence, by the last session held for this study towards mid-March, the children accessed an average of ten minutes of silence. This reminded me of Bell's (2009) claims that repeated habits eventually become like rituals and become engrained into a society. As it can be seen from Figure 5.2 there was a gradual increase of silence as the weeks progressed. A slight regression can be seen between weeks 13 and 14. As Lees (2012a) notes, when silence moments are applied with children, they lead the sessions, hence duration and participation depends on their mindset too. As a matter of fact, these two weeks happened to fall after the school's mid-term and carnival holidays. The children were still thrilled over Carnival. This is also reflected in Ms Angie's observation entry where she wrote, 'three of the group were refusing to co-operate as a result the class was disturbed [*disrupted*].' [I.O.S_30] In her journal entry she states that

> children were extremely energetic and hectic. At times I've recorded regression in terms of length of time in silence, and others I just had to call it off because of disruptions which were out of control or simply children were not co-operative and disturbing the whole class. [R.J_28]

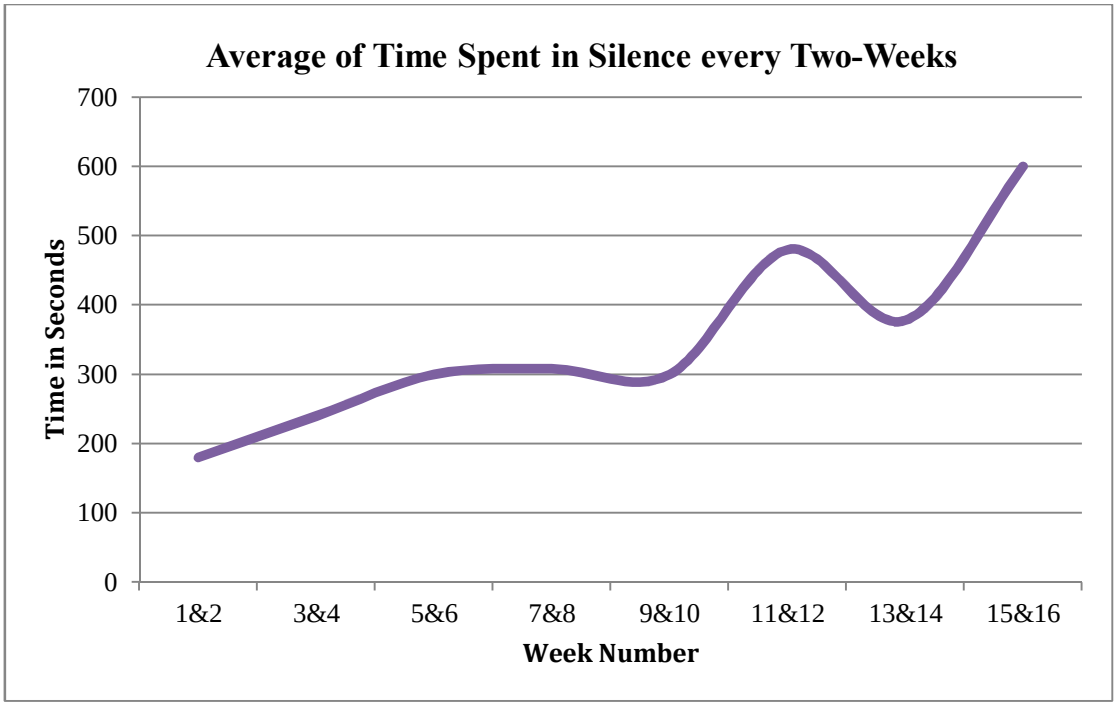

Figure 5.2 Average of Time Spent in Silence every Two-Weeks

It should be noted that the children adapted to the silence technique quite easily. From the data gather it seems that they felt its advantages.

[F.N_10]:

MA: GMF why are you quiet?
[RSF is singing softly]
GMF: *għax il-lights inħobbhom* [Because I like the lights] [referring to the fractal like lights on the board]
MA: why?
RAM: *għax jixegħlu* [Because they light up]
MA: DPM why do you like quiet time?
DPM: *għax inkun bravu* [Because I will be good/attentive]

[I.V.T_39]:
NC: *meta nagħmlu dawn silent activities flimkien intom tieħdu pjaċir*? [Do you enjoy it when we participate in these silent activities?]
EBF: *iva* [Yes]
NC: *għaliex*? [Why?]
DPM: *għax hekk* [Just because]
EBF: *jien nieħu gost fil-kwiet* [I enjoy myself when it is quiet]
NC: *u x'tagħmlu meta naghmlu silence*? [and what do you do when we practice silence?]
GMF: *noqgħod nisma'* [I listen]

[A.F.T_46]:

NC: *Inti kont tieħu gost meta konna nagħmlu silence acitivities? X'kien jogħġbok?*[Did you enjoy participating in the silence activities?]
EBF: il-music [The music]
NC: *eħe, l-music kienet togħġbok? Għaliex?* [Yes, you liked the music? Why?]
EBF: *għax ikun hemm qishom* fireworks [because there are like fireworks]
NC: *DPM Inti kont tieħu gost meta konna nagħmlu silence acitivities? X'kien jogħġbok?*[DPM Did you enjoy participating in the silence activities? What did you like?]
DPM: *il-ħaxix* [the grass]
NC: *il-ħaxix? Għaliex kont tieħu pjaċir? Għaliex kien jogħġbok il-ħaxix?* [the grass? Why did you enjoy it? Why did you like grass?]
DPM: *għax inħobbu* [because I like it]
…
GMF: *nogħqod kwieta* [I stay quiet]
NC: *u għaliex kien jogħġbok imma*? [but why did you like it?]
GMF: *għax inħobbu* [because I like it]
NC: *trid kieku nibqgħu nagħmlu acitivties tal-quiet time? Tieħu gost?* [Would you like to continue doing quite time activities? Would you like it?]
GMF: *ijja* [Yes]
…
JFM: you
NC: me? You liked me?
JFM: yes

From Ms Angie's point of view through her journal she states how she prepared the children for 'quiet time' and how she made used of it as a mediating tool to promote silence and observation. She also mentions the tangible tools that she used:

> I instruct them softly to be quiet because this is our 'quiet time', 'our time in silence' where we can stop and think…[she sets the scene] lights are switch off, blinds are shut, candle lit, children sit in a circle around the candle on an individual rubber square carpet. Tibetan bowls play back sounds fill the classroom with their echo…I ask them to look at [the candle's] flickering light [R.J_1]

Ms. Angie taught children how to sit comfortably and use breathing exercises during quiet time. Over time children became so accustomed to the 'technique' that they started to ask for it. This technique goes hand in hand with Haskin's (2011) invitation to teachers to "consider incorporating a daily inner peace time into the classroom. Prepare for such a time by discussing with students what this time is for and how it should be used" (p.38).

> Teacher shows good sitting posture with legs crossed. Teacher encourages children to look at the candle and join hands together and listen to music [F.N_3]

> Teacher is holding hands together with head bowed down. Children are sitting in a semi circle some looking at fractal like lights on the interactive board, some looking down at the floor and some looking at each other [D.I_8]
>
> I told them to breathe in from their nose and out from their mouth [R.J_2]
>
> They are able to settle down faster and most of the children are able to close their eyes and make efforts which are noticeable to be quiet and engage [R.J_12]
>
> Right after clean-up time they were able to gather with their cushions round the candle and quiet time was expected by the group [R.J_13]
>
> The children by now, seem to be understanding the importance to calm down and engage in silence to be able to focus more and be organised…Now, that we've been doing these sessions for quite a bit, the children expect it and they ask for it. They ask for it, whether they enjoy it, feel its importance, got accustomed or feel that they gain from it [R.J_38]

The last entry clearly shows that the pedagogical tools of silence and observation helped the children to process and access their school reality in a calmer way. The tools also promoted acquisition of new knowledge. An example of this is when the children participated in the 'sitting like a frog' activity. Through the activity they watched a video and observed how a frog catches a fly by staying still, observing the fly and then catching it. They even practised the focusing skill using the frog's technique:

> [I.V.T_14]:
> NC: pretend you're a frog. Stay still. Look at the fly. Be very still and when you're ready you can catch the fly
> JSM: I'm ready
> NC: then catch the fly
> [Children snap to catch the fly]

During 'quiet time' the children also practised the skill of focusing. Tangible and intangible tools were used to aid the children to focus. Lees (2012a) is of the opinion that stillness does not necessarily go with silence especially where there is the participation of young children. She claims that stillness "is not the determining or necessary condition for the state of mind to emerge" (p.5). This is in fact reflected in the children's attitudes during 'quiet time'. The data showed that they were still embracing and practising the skill of focusing and observation even though not fully still.

[I.V.T_15]:

NC: *issa għalqu għajnejkhom u se nisimgħuha* [singing bowl] *u x'ħin ma tisimgħuwiex aktar iftħu għajnejkom.* [Now close your eyes and listen to it [singing bowl] and when you don't hear it anymore open your eyes].
[Some children close eyes. RAM covers eyes with hands. JSM lies flat on the floor facing the ceiling. Liam points at him and silently laughs. I play the singing bowl with the stick]

JFM: I hear it
[Children open eyes and look at the singing bowl]

> The children were engaged in all sessions. I could tell during breathing exercises, by watching them listening to their own breathing, closing their little eyes, rocking from side to side slowly, staring at the candle and putting their little hands together like in prayer [R.J_33]

As seen from the literature review, a school day is a hectic one, both for educators and even for children. According to Gallagher & Thordarson (2018), Catlin Fabel School in Oregon formed what they call 'breakaway'. This is a period where everyone in the school 'break[s] away' from all the normal daily routines however learning still happens in diverse ways. This assisted both teachers and learners to engage in different learning experiences and helped access reality in a calmer way. Furthermore, Lees (2012b) states "pausing can work educationally and mentally, to encourage a state of mind that is open to slow reflection and making sense of things" (p.95). Ms. Angie noticed this fact a few times in her journal. She claimed that she used it as 'a meditation session mid-way' [38]. She said that

> I wrapped up other activities to stop the children from what they were doing and carry out a silence activity instead…I feel that this calmed them down in the middle of the school day [and] after the session the children were able to concentrate more and focus without being disruptive. [R.J_28]

In addition she noted that:

> on one occasion a boy referred to 'silence' as 'the thing we do to re-organise the classroom!' What he meant is that there would be chaos with all the children playing or working on an activity and during 'silence' sessions, everything seems to be organised and falls into place. I think this is his way of saying that, 'silence is the time where he, and other kids, are given space to be in touch with themselves. [R.J_38]

5.3.1.2 Fieldwork Activities

Lees (2012a) makes the analogy that outdoor nature education is the prelude to silence just as much a river is the prelude to the idea that the earth provides humans with water. Gathered data showed that the skills of silence and observation

served as tools to help children access the outdoor reality during the fieldwork activities. An increase in the use of the skills was seen along the three outings. In fact, although children were not noted using the skill of quieting to process and access their reality during the first outing, this was no longer the case during the subsequent outings:

> children sitting on the ground, soft music in the background along with that of natural birds. I play the singing bowl. Some children close eyes, others not…DGM and KFF are lying down on the throw over. JSM joins them and they stay there silently [F.V.T_29]
>
> I am ringing the tingsha cymbals and EBF and MMF have eyes closed [F.V.T_43]

Furthermore, by the third outing the skill of focusing truly helped them to access the area in a calmer way. It was noted that the children 'spend[t] most of the time in focusing, looking around for small stones and twigs to put on the bit bigger rectangular rock…most of the time walking slowly not running and busying themselves with stone looking and collecting.' [F.V.T_43] 'Interaction is calmer, they are not running much' [F.O.S_43]. This is very different from what happened during the first outing, which happened prior to any initiation of the programme, where the children 'run wild most time stepping on grass, wanting to touch camera [F.O.S_0], no specific aim as if not knowing what to do.' [F.V.T_0] In addition, due to an increase in the quieting and focusing, it was noted that by the second and third outing the children observed more insects, plants and creatures and they felt ecstatic about it. This relates to what Lees (2012a) notes about silence and outdoor nature education when she says that "techniques of silence… can also be part of outdoor education: sitting under a tree to meditate for example or mindfully noticing the sun through the leaves of the tall trees" (p8).

> during the fieldwork children observed butterfly, snails, donkey [in an adjacent location on the way in], the sound of fireworks, the sound of birds chirping, the sound of the donkey and the sound of an excavator [F.O.S_29]

> [F.V.T_29]
> DPM: *dik x'inhi miss*? [what is that miss?]
> LSE: *dik siġra tal-ful, ejja ħa taraw kif tkun* [that is a bean tree, come and see what it looks like]. [MMF, LGM, RSF and NGM join] *Qed tarawha għandha flower white bil-black, issa la twaqqa' l-flower jikber il-ful imbagħad tiekluh. Tħobbuh il-ful*? [are you seeing it has a white with black flower, now when the flower drops the bean grows and then you eat it. Do you like beans?]
> EBF: *Jien inħobbu* [I like it]

DPM: *Anke jien* [Even I]

ten children look around trying to find things to collect…EBF sees a small spider and exclaims 'look!'…JFM grab JSM attention and tells him 'this is a honey tree, look' [F.O.S_43]

This scenario was not the same with the children in class (C). From the observations, the skills of quieting and focusing were not used by these children:

nine children run wildly without aim…jump wildly on built up campfire structure…run again wildly and hit pine cones on trees…run wildly and harvesting grass and flowers [F.O.S_43]

5.3.2 Seeing and Reframing as part of silence and observation

"Silence manifests what is promising for democratic interactions…includes willingness to listen, ability to listen to others [and] eyes that see with wisdom…It operates through cognitive cause and effect [and] through spaces for self and other that silence offers" (Lees, 2012b, p.116). I like to associate the skills of seeing and reframing with a refractive lens exchange. When people undergo refractive lens exchange surgery they do so in order to enhance their blurry lens vision to that of a clear one without the use of glasses. Likewise, when human beings stop, silence themselves and intensely observe a situation before acting, their vision becomes clearer and consequently will be more insightful and able to reframe the reality presented to them. Van Wieren and Kellert (2013) stated that "people who possess no sense of the aesthetic appeal of nature or view the world as meaningless are burdened by excessive cynicism [and thus lead them to the] inability to tolerate alternative views" (p.244).

5.3.2.1 In-Class Activities

From the data collected it is interesting to note JSM's attitude, a child in class (E). He has difficulty with seeing and reframing throughout a good span of the study. These observations go hand in hand with Kaiser Greenland's (2010) reflection that "putting preconceived concepts and ideas aside to look at something with fresh eyes is one of the most difficult qualities to cultivate" (p.64). These skills were presented during

the in-class activities with the aid of 'Duck, Rabbit', 'Mystery Box', 'Not a Box' exercises and the reading of the book titled 'Silence'.

[I.V.T_14]:
JSM: *imma żrinġ jekk ikun go movie narah imma inkella disgusting* [but if a frog is in a movie I watch it but if not it is disgusting]

[I.V.T_16]:
NC: and in Spring, *tafu x'tisma'*? [Do you know what she hears?]
[I play an audio file buzzing bees]
JFM: sprinklers!
NC: *tisma' ż-żunżan* [she can hear bees]
JFM: bees fly, they fly
JSM: if you see one, you give him a *ponn* [punch him]
NC: would you like it if someone does that to you
JFM: No
JSM: *imma* if he stings you I cry u *ponn* [but if he stings you I cry and punch]

[I.V.T_17]:
NC: *jien mhux duck qed narah, għalija mhux duck* [I am not seeing a duck, for me it is not a duck]
LNM: *papra* [duck]
JSM: duck
NC: *jiena rabbit qed narah* [I'm seeing a rabbit
JSM: *eh?!* [what?!]
NC: rabbit
JSM: *le rabbit ikollu l ears hekk* [no a rabbit has ears like this] [pointing hands up on head]
NC: *hawnhekk l ears qegħdin ara, din għajnejh u dan wiċċu* [here are the ears look, these are his eyes and this is his face] [I point to picture]
JSM: (hesitating a bit) *LE! Dak duck dak duck, dak il mouth u dak il head*. [NO! That's a duck, that's the mouth and that's the head]
NC: *U ma jistawx ikunu bil kontra Jayden? Ma jistawx ikunu dawn l ears, din il head, mouth* [So they can't be otherwise? Can't these be the ears and this the head and mouth?] (I point to picture)
JSM: (smiles and hesitates) *le dik il head* [No that is the head]
NC: *hawn xi ħadd jaħseb li hu rabbit*? [Is there anyone who thinks this is a rabbit?]
JSM: *dak duck*! [That's a duck!]
LNM: rabbit
JSM: *LEEEEEE* [NOOOOOO] [screaming]
NC: JFM what do you think?
JFM: I know it is a hamster
JSM: (shouting) not a hamster! A duck!
NC: *ħa nurikom xi ħaga oħra ħa nara x tgħiduli. Ħa nara dan x'inh*u? [Let me show you something else and see what you will tell me. Let me see what is this?]
RAM: cat
JSM: cat
NC: *jien mhux cat qed nara. Hawn xi ħadd qed jara xi ħaġa oħra*? [I am not seeing a cat. Is there anyone seeing something else?]

KFF: mouse
NC: KFF is saying a mouse. Is anyone seeing a mouse?
JSM: (screaming) *hux mouse*! [not mouse!]
NC: *Mhux qed tarah ara il face tal-mouse*? [Aren't you seeing the face of the mouse?]
JSM: NO
NC: Who is seeing a mouse? Raise your hands up
JSM: no no no
NC: Look these are its ears, its eyes and mouth
JSM: NO

[I.V.T_37]:
NC: ok what do you think he is imagining now?
JSM: a shield!!!
NGM: a door
RAM: a door
GMF: a door
NC: ok a door, a shield. *LNM x taħseb inti*? [LNM what do you think?]
LNM: a door
JSM: a shield!!
NC: a door as well. JFM what do you think?
JFM: I suppose it's a door
MA: let me suggest something, maybe it is of something else not just a door
JSM: shield!
NC: ok so some of you are saying a shield and some are saying a door. Let us see. (I continue the video and it was a door. JSM makes no reaction)

As it can be seen JSM found it difficult to accept other's opinions in order to access the presented reality. This behaviour and that of seeing (insight) is also seen during the fieldwork activities presented further in the following subsection. However, from the collected data, it emerged that over time, JSM's attitude changed and he could at times be insightful and reframe so as to access reality. This shows that the pedagogical tools of silence and observation may promote cognitive processing and coincide with Hooker and Fodor's (2008) observation that "mindfulness actually may lead to changes in thought patterns and the attitude of one's thoughts: cognitive change" (p.80).

> one girl commented after a while 'it's quite!' I joked, saying, 'no more!' So I continued, 'Do you like it when our class is this quiet?' Some nodded, some said 'yes' and JSM roared 'NO!' So I turned at JSM and asked him 'why?' He said, 'because it makes me sleepy!' I said that's good, and that's not sleepy, it's calmer!' I gave a brief explanation about being calm. And after a couple of minutes JSM said, 'OK! I'm calm!' I asked if he likes it now and he said 'yes'. [R.J_5]

> even the most energetic boys of the group are engaging in longer periods of time in silence…one child (JSM) said that this was his time to proof that he was a good boy! [R.J_18]

[I.V.T_37]:

[I start the 'Not a Box' activity by carrying a 'heavy' box in the middle]

JSM: Do you need a hand? [and came next to me to help me carry the 'heavy' box]

NC: No its ok because it is a bit heavy, I think I will manage thank you. [I carry the 'heavy' box in the middle]

JSM: I think there is a lot of things

NC: I think so too. What do you think I have in the box?

JSM: I don't know

…

NC: Yes, he is imagining that the box is a racing car. So he is using his imagination. Let me see what else [I continue the video]. What is he doing now?

JSM: Climbing

NC: Climbing could be. "What is he doing on top of the box?"

JSM: High

NC: Why?

JSM: Because he is imagining he is on the mountain

…

NC: Okay let us see what he is imagining [I continue the video]…Wow You're right JSM! He was imagining it's a mountain

JSM: Oh yeah! Oh Yeah!

…

NC: Well Done! Let me see now what he is going to do. [I continue the video] JSM: I told you!

NC: Very good, you are using your imagination really well!

JSM's insight improved and he was quite delighted to know that his observations were correct. He even used his insight well during Ms Angie's quiet time when she notes:

> I softly praise their efforts and JSM said 'we're doing our best' [R.J_8]

> farm animals is our present theme therefore I used flashcards and as for other nature sounds I used the book 'Silence'. JSM said 'the sounds from the book are all nature sounds and the ones of the flashcards are all from farm animals' [I.O.S_44]

Caranfa (2004) argues that the educator's oversight and neglect to truly listen instead of hearing, results into failure in education. Therefore, one can argue that the opposite of such attitude results into success in education. Through the in-class activities, some children chose to be insightful to access the reality by listening to

each other and commenting on other's ideas thus showing cognitive processing: 'children listened to each other's thoughts' [I.O.S_4]

> we had a conversation for 10-15 minutes with children taking turns and very few interruptions [R.J_4]
>
> children mentioned something to be grateful for…I am grateful for my friends; I am grateful for my new shoes [I.O.S_22]
>
> they [the children] commented about their mummies being special women [I.O.S_41]

5.3.2.2 Fieldwork Activities

Two very interesting points resulted from the analysis of this theme of seeing and reframing. The first one revolved around the concepts of seeing and insight. During the first outing it was clear that the children did not employ any insight to interpret the reality around them. They were not 'kind' towards nature itself. In fact, as noted by Ms Angie herself, 'I joked with the adults about the fields being harvested because that's what they are doing, really!' [R.J_0]. Most of the children:

> run wildly, grab grass and pull it out from the root…JSM steps on all areas and pulls out flowers and hits acorns on the tree with a stick…JSM and RAM walk together. JSM says '*hemm nemlu warajk, ha nagħfġu*' [there is an ant behind you, let me crush it]…JSM catches spider on tree and steps on it [F.O.S_0]
>
> DPM is with LGM and shouts to MA '*hawnhekk sibt bebbuxu ara*!' [over here I found a snail over here, look] MA goes to see. DPM says '*kissru kissru kissru*' [break it, break it, break it] [F.V.T_0]

However, a positive shift was seen in second and third outings in this regard. An inclination towards nature appreciation was noted. Although during the second outing cutting of flowers was still observed: 'MMF, EBF, KFF, DPM, LNM are all cutting flowers' [F.V.T_29], by the third outing no one cut any flowers and instead the noted interaction was: 'EBF and MMF team up collecting small stones' [F.V.T_43] and as hinted under quieting and focusing the children busied themselves with stone collecting unlike the children in class (C) who spent most of the time running wildly and cutting flowers and grass. What was interesting about the cutting of the flowers during the second outing however, was that the children were not doing this out of non insight but as a caring gesture since the majority of them were doing so in order to give the flowers either to each other or to the adults as a nice

gesture: 'children cut the flowers around and give to each other…girls together but flowers and give me a bunch of flowers' [F.O.S_29]. Furthermore, insight towards small creatures was also noted. Likewise, JSM's positive change in attitude in the area was also noted. This showed that there was an increase in the use of the skill and thus silence and observation may have served as pedagogical tools to help the children process, interpret and access the outdoor reality:

> LGM, DPM, MMF, EBF, GMF and RSF together with MA stand up. MA holds all collected tiny snails in hand. Children follow her to put them back in the soil in a safe place…JSM sees spider on ground. JSM comes next to me and tells me about the spider and that he did not catch it…JSM sees a beetle; picks it up; shows it to MA and goes to put it in a safe place [F.O.S_29]

The second interesting point revolved around the concept of reframing. DCM who is an autistic child, processed, interpreted and accessed the reality presented in the three outings very cautiously. During the first outing he stayed next to his LSE all the time and did not leave her side. During the second and third outings DCM tried to access the area on his own however, on both occasions it was observed that after a few minutes, he was not at ease and went out of the fieldwork perimeter next to the LSE.

> DCM looks with a look of uncertainty at the surrounding and walks slowly stepping on the long grass. He walks off the grass out of the perimeter [F.V.T_29]

> DCM looks at the children collecting stones and does the same. DCM sees them piling up stones but does not join. DCM goes out of the perimeter next to LSE [F.V.T_43]

What was interesting in both occasions was that the LSE assisted DCM to reframe the situation. In the second outing it was noted that: 'LSE speaks calmly to DCM and invites him to explore the field again pinpointing to the grass and flowers and to find snails. DCM returns to the field with LSE' [F.O.S_29] and in the third outing it was noted that:

> DCM re-enters the field holding hands with LSE. LSE points to the grass and small stones. DCM lets go of LSE hand, walks around not far away from LSE. LSE slowly steps out of the perimeter. DCM continues walking slowly around and stays in the field. He goes next to MMF and looks around what the others are doing. He observes and stays there and walks around [F.V.T_43]

This shows that DCM used the pedagogical skills of silence and observation through the notion of reframing to process, interpret and access the reality, as well as, made

use of cognitive processing. Haskins (2011) notes that if an educator "does not fully accept the benefits of taking time for silence, most likely she will urge the child onward to get busy with 'real work.' By doing so, the message is sent to children that moments of stillness and silence are not a valuable use of time" (p.35). Obviously, for the purposes of this study, in no way were Ms Emma and the LSE in her classroom expected to personally engage with the skills of silence and observation however, their observed behaviour through the data gathered adhered to Haskin's notion. The following episode, observed during class (C)'s second outing, shows how unlike the LSE of Ms Angie's class, the LSE of Ms Emma's class did not employ the skill of reframing and neither did she assist LXM (an autistic child) in applying such a skill to access his given reality. The instance he shouted that he was bored, instead of guiding him on how he can access reality using the presented materials and connection, without the use of external gadgets, she took him out of the perimeter and to a different area a bit far away.

> LXM jumps on the ground. LXM stops and starts shouting 'I'm bored! I'm bored!' LXM lies on the ground shouting. LSE runs to him, grabs his hand and takes him out of the field perimeter. LSE takes him a bit far away in a different area. LSE says '*għax dan jekk ma jkollux ipad jew scooter jew balloon ma jkunx jaf x'se jaqbad jagħmel*' [because this one if he doesn't have an ipad or scooter or a ball he wouldn't know what to do.] [F.O.S_43]

Obviously, there may be other factors at play here including the position of the children on the spectrum of autism, however the episodes still show a difference in attitude from both LSE's and how modelling reframing helps children to try and put such skill into action.

It should be noted that a lack of insight towards nature was observed during both class (C)'s fieldwork activities:

> ATM sees a snail shell and says '*jaqqq*!'['yuk'] [F.O.S_0]
>
> JBM and ATM hit pinecones on the trees with twigs and keep hitting until they fall [F.O.S_43]

5.3.3 Emotions as part of silence and observation

Haskins's (2011) thoughts about human being's inner voice fit in nicely with emotions. She states that "although inner silence is the more difficult silence to

cultivate, it is the more important kind of silence, because even when our environment is quiet, if the mind is turbulent, it is nearly impossible to achieve deep or lasting concentration" (p.36). This is in fact one of the challenges when individuals practice silence since when all of a sudden the mind finds itself in silence it tends to wonder off and often times one ends up thinking about past situations. This brings with it a set of emotions for which in certain instances humans will not be in a position to control. However, ironically this is also the nicest thing about silence and mindfulness practices if they are exercised in the correct way. In fact, Lees (2012b) confirms that "silence practices recalibrate the order of one's focus, releasing the mind from its attachment to worries and anxieties and allowing it to flow freely" (p.115).

5.3.3.1 In-Class Activities

Controlling emotions in specific situations is not the easiest of things for human beings especially where there is rage (Kaiser Greenland, 2010). Often very young children are not even able to express what they are feeling and end up getting more frustrated. Through mindful and silence practices they can also be guided in how to make use of cognitive processing and learn how to deal with such emotions when they arise. In Chapter 1, the issue of the 'here and now' (Hay & Nye, 2006) was discussed and from the findings of this study it can be said that mindful breathing techniques do assist the children to reach this focal point. The in-class activity of the sparkling jar, provided an opportunity for the children to analogically visualise how the mind looks when a feeling of excessive emotion is present in them and how it looks when breathing techniques are applied, thus reaching the 'here and now'. It also helped children to understand better how and why, when one is experiencing excessive emotions it is best to tranquil oneself first instead of having an immediate reaction. Kaiser Greenland (2010) in relation to this notion and activity says that "it's not easy to explain this concept to children with words alone" (p.63). She explains the philosophy behind the activity by saying that:

> the glitter in the [jar] represents stress and strong emotions. When you shake the [jar], the particles whirl around, making the water cloudy. When you leave [it] alone, the water slowly clears…the visual experiment – the equivalent of going from feeling calm and clear-eyed to feeling stressed and overwhelmed and then

> back to feeling settled – helps kids connect the activity in the [jar] to the activity in their minds and bodies (Kaiser Greenland, 2016, p.23)

The children liked the glitter jar activity and could relate to the analogy:

[I.V.T_32]
NC: *meta tkunu irrabjati wicckhom kif ikun*? [what will you face look like when you are angry?]
RAM: *ikrah* [ugly]
[Children make an angry face]
NC: *allura meta nkunu irrabjati l-ilma fil-flixkun kif ikun*? [so when we are angry what will the water in the jar look like?]
JFM: *mhux tajjeb* [not good]
…
NC: *mela x'se nagħmlu meta nkunu se nirrabjaw*? [So what shall we do when we are going to get angry?]
JFM: *nagħmlu magic* [We will perform a magic trick]
NC: *kif nagħmluh*? [How will we do that?]
JFM: *nagħmlu hekk* [We do this]
[He shake hands in the air]
NC: good, we shake our anger away and then what do we do?
JFM: *nieħdu nifs* [We breathe]
[Children with hands shaking in the air take a deep breath in and slowly out]

During different episodes of silent time and activities, it was observed that children could relate to the 'here and now' (Hay & Nye, 2006). JFM, for example, expressed his emotion of happiness in the 'here and now' during the following episode:

[F.N_8]
JFM: I like the candle and the lights [referring to the fractal like lights on the board]
MA: why?
JFM: because they are different
MA: how do they make you feel?
JFM: I feel happy when we see the lights

JSM on the other hand, expressed his emotion of happiness but through what Donaldson (1992) calls 'line mode', that is, when children relate to time and space in a wider spectrum thus including past or future.

[F.N_8]:
JSM: when I was a baby I had a birthday
MA: when you had your birthday you were 1 then 2 then 3
JSM: when I had birthday I grabbed something
MA: *ehh il-quċċija mela* [Ohh 'the choosing' (a Maltese 1st birthday tradition)]
JSM: then they helped me and then they gave me a piece of cake
MA: what did you grab?
JSM: I don't know

In addition, some children apart from connecting with the 'here and now', also related with what Hay and Nye (2006) refers to as the 'there and then' and connect to future events:

[F.N_8]:
JFM: but when Christmas comes very soon Santa gets me a guitar
MA: yes?
LGM: *jien karozza ħa jġiebli* [He is going to get me a car]
DPM: *u jien robot* [and for me a robot]

5.3.3.2 Fieldwork Activities

A positive shift in this area was noted along the three outdoor activities. The glitter jar activity left its mark on the children and they used the experience during the third outing to relate what the activity represented:

[F.V.T_43]
NC: *tiftakru meta l-iskola ġibt dak il-bott u tfajnilu l-glitters? Dik għalxiex għamilniha*? [Do you remember when at school I got that jar and put glitter in it? Why did we do that?]
RAM: *jiena*! [Me!]
NC: *għidli RAM* [Tell me RAM]
RAM: does not give any answer
NC: anyone remembers?
JSM: because become ANGRY!
NC: very good and how was the water?
JSM: not nice, clear better
NC: and why clear better?
JSM: because calm

In their study Hooker and Fodor (2008) speak about "awareness of the thinking process as well as on letting go" (p.88). Through the instances observed in the data that portrayed emotions it showed how the children interpreted the 'here and now' reality around them. As with the other themes discussed till now, during the first outing this was not used much. In fact, only two small instances were noted. One expressed the 'here and now' through distress and the other one through fright: 'LNM walks very slowly assessing the area with a distressed look. LNM walks very close to LSE…Bee goes next to JSM. JSM runs wildly to avoid it' [F.O.S_0]. During the other two fieldwork activities, emotions that expressed serenity, sadness, excitement, superiority and fondness were observed and used to interpret the given reality:

> DGM sits on the ground alone and calmly looks at the children, at the ground and the surroundings [serenity]…JSM observes butterfly, runs after it. Butterfly flies beyond perimeter. JSM cannot follow it anymore, is sad for few minutes [sadness]…LNM observes an excavator impact hammer machine in the distance; calls others to see it; runs to tell LSE [excitement] [F.O.S_29]
>
> JSM gives flower to KFF and says 'princess this is for you' [fondness] [F.V.T_29]
>
> GMF takes full control of the cooking activity like a boss [superiority] [F.O.S_43]
>
> DGM collects stones on his own and puts them on another separate big rectangle rock. NGM and LNM remove each stone DGM puts on, to take it on the other big rock. DGM gets upset but after some time joins the others [sadness] [F.V.T_43]

5.3.4 Caring and Connecting as part of silence and observation

Champagne (2003) notes that when one dedicates time to silence one will be more able to focus, discover and listen to the inner self. When this is practiced one will be able to connect more with others and to care more too. Likewise, Donaldson (1992) presents the term 'value-sensing' and associates it to the factor when people are able to make sense of their feelings such as empathy and apply it to access the reality they are presented with. When one is given the tools of silence and observation one is able to process reality more clearly as well as connect and access it in a more intimate manner. Hay and Nye (2006) refer to Schutz's work and his term 'tuning'. Schutz expresses how music might aid this 'tuning' of a human being to connect and access a reality. The authors speak about Schutz's example and say that 'when a pianist plays a piece of music and someone else hears it, both pianist and hearer are participating in an immediate simultaneous stream of consciousness…this steam is also shared with the composer of the music" (p.68).

5.3.4.1 In Class Activities

As in Schutz's example, the children in the study connected with music. During quiet time, one of the tangible mediated artefacts, the speakers, were always used to fill in the atmosphere with calm music which helped the children to interconnect with silence and observation. This was also used during the second and third outdoor fieldwork activities. Connectedness with silence and observation was noted and it

was also noted through Lees's (2012a) lens, that when silence is tackled with young children, it does not necessarily refer to having their bodies in perfect stillness.

> Some of the children are fidgeting, some move, some giggle, some stare, some ask about the candle [R.J_1]

> I instruct them to cross their legs and to my surprise they put their hands together most of them. So I praise the kids for what that they did and the others followed [R.J_4]

Connectedness with others was also noted especially through the 'Stadium Wave' activity:

> [it was RAM's birthday]. Children hold hands of the child next to them. RAM sits at the end of the semicircle. DCM sits at the other end. DCM lifts up hand joining with EBF, then EBF lifts up hand joining with DGM and goes on until arrives at RAM. Every time child lifts hand says 'Happy Birthday RAM' [I.V.T_40]

Zimmerman and Morgan (2016) "suggest that silence has its own life which offers many different approaches to thinking. It can be considered as an element of expression, in the elaboration of speech. But it can be considered also in relation to other elements around us without the mediation of speech" (p.403). This type of connection with others was observed through Ms. Angie's journal where she wrote that: 'mostly conversation was about their parents and what they've done or went recently…they were quite focused considering their age, and they listened to each other attentively' [R.J_4]. In addition to connectedness, co-operation from and amongst the children was also observed along with an increase in the skill. This is a very positive thing:

> they co-operated well in breathing exercises [I.O.S_2]

> I'm very happy with their co-operation today [I.O.S_3]

> I asked some of them to help me place flat cushions in a circle. Some of the kids simply followed and sat down. So I hurried to put on the candle and sat on a cushion [R.J_5]

> After 'clean up' they got the cushions and they've put them in a circle without instructions whatsoever [R.J_9]

"By learning both attention skills and a compassionate worldview, children are introduced to tools that could help them live a balanced life" (Kaiser Greenland, 2010, p.18). The children used these notions to access their presented reality.

5.3.4.2 Fieldwork Activities

With reference to connectedness and 'tuning', through the outdoor fieldwork activities the children were able to tune to the music of nature as well as its sensitivity. By the third outing they were able to be in the 'hear and now', be in touch with their inner self and logically access the given reality as well. As discussed through the work of Zimmermann and Morgan (2016), sounds of nature enrich human being's apprehension of the world around them. This goes hand in hand with Lees (2012a) suggestion that "silence that is aural quiet/noiselessness is not helpful in the outdoors; it stops a relationship to nature and also to what silence offers that is more than the concept of silence as aural quiet" (p.3). In effect, as hinted earlier, from the data collected, it was clearly noted that by the second outing the children, even though they moved around, they connected more with nature, they observed more natural creatures and were able to hear nature sounds such as birds chirping [F.O.S_29]. The children were also observed in connecting with the teacher during the second outing:

> LGM, DPM, MMF, sits next to MA and talk. MA invites them to observe what is in the soil. LGM finds a tiny snail. Others while sitting on the ground, sets on finding more snails. After some time EBF, GMF and RSF join them. Together they look for snails and talk with MA about the snails [F.V.T_29]

Furthermore, an increase in connectedness and co-operation was greatly observed especially during the third and last outing. The children felt more in sync with the nature around them and managed to access it in creative ways. They also engaged in teamwork. This relates to Haskins's (2011) comment about Montessori whereby "she emphasised collective effort and cooperation, necessary for group silence, and she found that the children expressed great interest and delight in achieving silence" (p.35).

> KFF is helping GMF with the stones and GMF is indicating where to put them on big rock [D.I_43]

> DPM, NGM and RSF collect small stones and put them on a big stone. LGM and DGM team up and look for small stones too. Together they build something…The majority of the class team up to put the small stones on top of each other [F.O.S_43]

> at one point all the class team up collecting stones and piling them on the bigger rock, just LNM is picking twigs on his own [F.V.T_43]

A shift in caring is also observed with a lot of it being use during the last outing, more than what was observed in the other outings. According to Kaiser Greenland (2016) “the qualities caring and connecting emerge naturally as children see the web of relationships” (p.2). I must say that I do not fully agree with this notion since I believe that at times children, on their own, still find it difficult to care and connect but easily achieve it once guided through the skills. In fact, this is what happened in this study too. The notions were less observed at the beginning but amply noted in the second and third outing.

> KFF lies on cushion again and closes eyes as if sleeping. JSM goes next to her and pats her gently on the head. NGM calls out for JSM from far away to join him. JSM ignores NGM and keeps patting KFF. DGM joins in and sits next to KFF. JSM sees a piece of grass on cushion and gently stroke KFF’s face with it. DGM accidentally hits KFF on the face. JSM calmly calls out for DGM and DGM apologises. KFF stands up. JSM calls her to go with him and holds her hand. JSM and KFF walk together slowly. JSM saw flower, cut it and gave it to KFF. JSM and KFF walk back to cushion on the grass, lie on blanket and close eyes [F.O.S__26]

> [F.V.T_43]:
>
> [GMF, LGM, MMF, EBF, NGM and DPM are finding small stones and twigs and putting them on a bigger rectangular rock. DPM is leading the activity. MMF holds two small stones, puts her hand behind her back and goes next to DPM]
>
> MMF: *DPM Għandi xi ħaġa għalik* [DPM I have something for you]
>
> [DPM looks up]
>
> DPM: *X’għandek*? [What do you have?]
>
> [MMF shows him the stones and smile. DPM smiles back takes the stones and places them on the big rock. MMF leaves to find other stones]

With regards to the children in class (C) connectedness was only observed once during their second outing where they joined together for a few minutes to build a ‘campfire’. [F.O.S_43] As for caring, the opposite of it was observed during their first outing and not seen during their second outing.

5.3.5 Awe & Wonder and Questioning as part of silence and observation

The literature reviewed in Chapter 3 showed how children are born curious and express amazement when discovering something new (Engel, 2015). Hay and Nye (2006) express how

> a consideration of the vastness of the universe strikes awe in us [and how the children’s] sense of mystery can be awakened by much more down-to-earth

> and familiar phenomena – simple events such as a flame appearing when a match is struck (pp. 71, 72).

This factor brings with it a sense of mystery and instigates children to ponder and ask questions to learn more and is also related to the notions discussed in Chapter 2 about how human beings interpret and interact with reality. Hay and Nye (2006) present this too by saying that "young children initially sense that much of life is incomprehensible and therefore mysterious" (p.72).

5.3.5.1 In-Class Activities

Hay and Nye's (2006) examples of awe and wonder coincide with two particular tangible mediated tools which were used in this study and for which the children expressed their awe and wonder. Ms. Angie wrote that 'the group was particularly amazed by the candle. They were astonished every time I put it on. I always could notice their awe every time I did.' She makes the following observations too along the study:

> DCM is in awe. He says 'it's beautiful' referring to the candle light…DCM asks about the candle. He's curious [R.J_7]
>
> The candle raises questions. They start to relate candle light to silence [I.O.S_4]
>
> Why the candle? What about the candle? [I.O.S_1]

This fascination with the candle, especially from DCM, is also observed through other gathered data. DCM's fixation is similar to Gelb's (2004) reflection on "Leonardo's childlike sense of wonder and insatiable curiosity" (p.49).

> DCM is kneeling close to the candle smiling. MA and LSE are smiling at him. Other children are sitting forming a semicircle with their legs crossed [D.I_3]
>
> DCM is fascinated with the candle and keeps going close to the candle to see it [F.N_10]

Other instances of awe & wonder and asked questions, reflects Hay and Nye's (2006) notion that "the child's perception of mystery develops into a mature insight into the human condition, rather than being dismissed as infantile thinking" (p.72). This is so since from the analysed data it was seen that when questions were made,

Ms Angie replied using specific techniques that invited children to enhance critical thinking skills and raise insights.

[F.N_10]
DPM: *jien għandi ġulbiena d-dar* [I have vetches at home]
MA: *għalfejn għamilt il-ġulbiena*? [Why did you plant the vetches?]
DPM: *biex nagħmlu sabiħ ħdejn il-bambin* [To create a nice atmosphere next to baby Jesus]

[F.N_11]
JFM: it is snowing
MA: here?
JFM: outside
MA: so here in Malta it is snowing outside?
JFM: no not Malta, in London
MA: ahh yes, why not in Malta
JFM: mmm Malta sun shines

Ms Angie also remarked various times that 'they [the children] ask very intelligent questions and insightful ones too' [R.J] such as 'why we pray in silence? Why it's important to be silent?' [I.O.S_9]. In a particular instance from the data it was noted that JSM made use of the awe & wonder and questioning theme to interpret the reality around him when he asked 'how come there are singing bowls [he was hearing them] and I can't see them?'...for this Ms Angie wrote that 'I used a virtual sound' [I.O.S_42].

Relating to the last observation Ms Angie noted that 'the singing bowls [to my surprise] had a longer period of time to play their part in astonishing the children from this group' [R.J_47]. At the same time, from the gathered data I could observe that the first time I, as the researcher, made use of the singing bowl 'DCM and KFF jump, open mouth and exclaim a 'ħŭ' sound. EBF opens mouth in astonishment' [I.V.T_15]. Furthermore, when I introduced the tingsha cymbals 'LNM opens mouth with amazement expression EBF is staring at them. I generate a sound with them. LGM smiles with amazement and looks at LNM. LNM smiles back' [I.V.T_32].

5.3.5.2 Fieldwork Activities

Through the environment presented during the fieldwork activities the children engaged in diverse ways of awe & wonder and questioning to interact with and

interpret the given reality. Zimmerman and Morgan (2016) claim "silence presents itself when we face something which is frightening, astonishing, and perhaps even truly awesome" (p.403). As with the other cases, a shift was seen in the usage frequency however for this theme a very slight shift was observed. Most of the episodes whereby the theme was employed are already noted under the previous discussed themes mainly those of 'seeing and focusing' and 'caring and connecting'. This shows a correlation with what is examined in Chapter 3, that we are holistic human beings hence we interact with reality using a collection of diverse skills. This can be applied to all the emergent themes however due to this written account being a dissertation and for the sake of the study, each theme was separately presented. Notwithstanding, the following are three related gathered data elements, one from each fieldwork activity, that are not mentioned yet:

> LNM asks LSE about soil. LSE says 'the plants, they come out of the soil, you never see them? If you do like this look [she moves some soil with her feet] that's the soil so soil is needed [I.V.T_0]
>
> RSF, NGM, LGM pick sticks and press it in soil making markings. They smile and draw different markings [F.O.S_29]
>
> JFM pointing to tree ['honey tree'] and JSM looking intensely [awe] [D.I_43]

With regards to the children in class (C) this theme was only observed once during their second outing when NSF turned to ME and told her '*hawnhekk hawn ħafna sabiħ*!' [It is very beautiful here!] [F.O.S_0]

5.3.6 Imitation and Imagination as part of silence and observation

In chapters 2 and 3, I have examined how human beings acquire sociocultural knowledge and how this is transferred into one's symbolic repertoire that may be accessed as a symbolic resource in the future when needed (see Valsiner & Rosa, 2007; Zittoun, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2013, 2017). I also explored the notion that when children commence their journey in formal education, their baggage already has acquired symbolic resources. Additionally, I explored the concept of time and space. Through this chapter one can see how children made use of these concepts in

relation to silence and observation techniques in order to access and interpret the given reality.

Creativity through imagination and the skill of imitation were distinctly observed from the gathered data. However, it was kept in mind that specific ideas, concepts and thoughts might already form part of the children's symbolic repertoire. Therefore, across the analysis of this theme, this fact will be taken into consideration when communicating how imagination helped the children to interpret and access the given reality. This is in line with Zittoun & Glăveanu's (2018) work, who note that during the process of interaction, humans "draw on material and social elements constituting their settings; they effectively call on various forms of available social and cultural knowledge and use them as resources" (p.3)

5.3.6.1 In-Class Activities

The instances observed through in-class activities whereby children made use of their imagination were mostly during the 'not a box' and 'mystery box' activity. It was also observed that in all instances most of the children made use of their pre-constructed knowledge (symbolic repertoire) in order to think and imagine hence relating to Zittoun & Glăveanu's (2018) concept that thinking can be substituted by imagination. During a specific instance from the 'not a box' activity, the children were shown a picture of a rabbit squirting water towards a rectangular box from a pipe. They had to think about what the rabbit is imagining the box to be.

[I.V.T_37]:

NC: Let me see now what he'll do… "Why do you think he is squirting the box?" He's putting water on the box. *Isa LNM x tahseb li hu*? [Come on LNM what do you think it is?]
LNM: Playing in the box
JSM: He is imagining he is doing all the fire down
NC: Fire down? Could be maybe there is a house on fire.
JFM: Let's see what he'll say!
NC: Let's think out a bit before JFM. *EBF x'tahseb inti*? [EBF what do you think?]
EBF: *Qiegħed jilgħab* [He is playing]
DCM: He's putting out the fire
GMF: *Qed jilgħab* [He is playing]
NC: *Qed jilgħab bil-kaxxa? Naraw naqra x'qed jagħmel? Ha nara*. [He is playing with the box? Let us see what he is doing] [I continue the video and it shows the box becoming a building on fire and the rabbit holding a hose. JSM's face lits up] *Wow, inti qed taqta' prosit*! [Wow you are guessing right, well

done!] [Referring to JSM]. He's imagining it is a building on fire. He is a fireman.

Furthermore, during the same activity when I carried a small cardboard box and pretended that it was heavy, the children's response (thinking and imagination) showed good use of spatial skills and thus an adequate acquired symbolic repertoire:

[I.V.T_37]:
NC: what do you think I have in the box?
LNM: a bottle
JSM: ehh I think it has balls in it
NC: it could be a bottle or balls. What else could it be?
JFM: a trumpet toy
EBF: a bottle

In addition during the 'mystery box' activity, where I also included the element of sound, a positive shift in the children's cognitive processing was observed:

[I.V.T_35]:
[I present a small non-transparent rectangular container to the children that contain: a tiny book, a pair of dice, three blocks, a small plastic ball, a pencil case, a packet of tissues and a peg]
NC: I have ten things in the box what do you think is inside?
JFM: a book
NC: could be. Would you like to hear what's inside?
[I shake the box]
JFM: blocks
DPM: blocks
NGM: blocks
NC: okay what else?
KFF: butterfly toy

An interesting observation however is made with regards to the children in the control group when they were presented with the identical activity of 'not a box'. The children's response to what they thought was in the small 'heavy' cardboard box showed no sign of adequate spatial skills. I must admit I was surprised with these observations since I almost expected the children in class (C) to provide similar responses to those provided by class (E) with reference to the reflections made at the beginning of this section. Therefore, with this observation, it could be conjectured that even though children already have an acquired symbolic repertoire, the practice of silence and observation as pedagogical tools may

enhance cognitive processing and assist children to interpret reality in a more logical manner.

[I.V.T_38.1]:
NC: what do you think I have in the box?
ATM: transformers
NC: I might have that. What else?
EGF: elephant
LXM: a cow
VGF: a rabbit
CFF: a lion
NC: that might be a bit big to fit here, what do you think?

5.3.6.2 Fieldwork Activities

Zittoun & Glăveanu (2018) speak about imagination and say that "through various forms of mediation, people imagine with the support of resources from the social world or their past experience" (p.6). This factor was observed along the three fieldwork outings with a higher activity rate during the third outing. This time the children used their symbolic repertoire to access the given reality. Apart from losing themselves in a world of imagination, they applied gestures from their own symbolic repertoire and shifted them into symbolic resources. This was observed through imitation of adult behaviours which were then put into the right context.

> JSM and NGM try to move a heavy rectangular rock. They do not succeed much. JSM sees KFF with a stick, he asks to have it, gets it and tries to lift the rock with the stick imitating the use of a long shovel to lift. Stick breaks [F.V.T_0]

> DPM puts twigs on pile of stone like someone cooking on campfire…DGM starts piling his own stones at a separate but nearby place like DPM…Girls team up next to the pile of stones and move around to pretend cook [F.O.S_43]

> GMF looks at all the girls around her, moves around like a busy lady and says '*kemm se ttina x'nagħmlu? Ahna irridu nsajru*!' ['why are you giving us so much to do? We have to cook!']…JFM joins the group and says 'oh no we won't have our soup ready!' [F.O.S_43]

> JSM picks up two long twigs one in each hand and does a Kung Fu move and says 'hiiyahh' [F.V.T_43].

> DPM, GMF, LNM. MMF, EBF, NGM are still in the same area. At one point EBF picks two twigs, places them next to the collected twigs on the big rectangular rock and says '*ħa nagħmel fire jien*' [I am going to start a fire]. She rubs the twigs together. Others look at her, MA comes by and says 'what a big castle you did!' DPM turns to her and says '*le dak fire*' [no that's a fire]. MA replies '*eh fire issa*?' [oh so now it is a fire?] DPM answers '*iva*' [yes]. More children come and put more twigs and stones

> for build up. DPM sitting down picks up two long twigs and insert them into the pile up as if checking the fire. LNM collects twigs and drops them on the rock. He shows NGM how to do it and tell him 'you let it drop and then it cooks it on top of the oven, this is the top of the oven'. NGM joins in [F.V.T_43]

Free imaginative play was also observed. This is linked to Hay and Nye (2006) when they say that "to investigate mystery requires the imagination to conceive what is beyond the known and what is 'obvious'" (p. 72). In fact, when there is connectedness, one shares the language of creativity, the language of dreams and imagination transforms. The children were observed "externalis[ing] their imagination in language…thus producing new meditational means that can transform self, others, and their shared sociocultural environment" (Zittoun & Glăveanu, 2018, p.6).

> JSM, DGM, DPM, NGM play together. DGM pretends he is a monster sleeping. Others pretend to strike at him shouting 'wooh'. DGM opens eyes, stands up and growls 'aarrrghhh'. Others run away [F.O.S_29]

> JSM pretend cry like a baby. NGM joins in. JSM screams 'aarrrghhh dinosaur talk'. NGM repeats. JSM runs and shot 'dinosaur'. NGM runs after says 'dinosaur catch us'. KFF joins in. JSM says 'hey hey dinosaur raptor coming. NGM says 'go go go' [F.V.T_29]

> JSM joins KFF, holds her hands, walk around and says 'let's go fishing' [F.O.S_43]

> RAM steps on a big rock, reaches a tree branch and swings using the branch. LNM is watching. RAM goes next to JSM. LNM imitates RAM but cautiously [F.V.T_43]

As stated earlier, the notion that children's symbolic repertoire is already partially filled upon commencing formal education was taken into account. In fact, the theme of imitation and imagination was also observed with the children in class (C) both during the first and second outing.

> ZBM bangs on big rectangular rock with twigs. ME asks: 'what are you doing?' ZBM replies: 'making music with twigs on drums' [F.O.S_43]

> AAF, JBM, EGF, NSF and ATM collect pine cones from floor, stones and twigs and pile them up on the ground. EGF says: 'let's build a campfire'…[after some time] children jumping wildly on built up campfire structure [F.O.S_43]

It was quite interesting to see that the imagination engaged with during their second outing was similar to that employed by the children in class (E) during their third outing. Both classes imagined scenarios and imitated gestures used during

camping activities, cooking and campfires. However, it was clearly observed that the duration engagement of class (C) with such activity was quite shorter and with less children co-operation/connection involved than that employed by class (E).

5.4 Teacher's Behaviour as part of silence and observation

The literature reviewed in Chapter 3 showed how children see adults as role models. The fact that Ms Angie applies positive silence, as a life philosophy is a great contribution to this study. This ties in accordingly with Lees's (2012b) remark that "teachers seeking to introduce silence into schools need to be practitioners of silence practice themselves [and] they also need to be personal role models for silence" (p.44).

Even though the teacher's behaviour was not one of the main emerging themes whilst analysing the data, I could not help noticing Ms Angie and the LSE unconsciously modelling the skills of silence and observations. These instances indirectly assisted the children to emulate positive silence and observation. Some of them are already listed such as:

- Modelling insight during the second outing, where some children gather around Ms Angie, finding tiny snails, talking about them and then putting them back in a safe place [noted with quieting and focusing; section 5.3.1.2; F.V.T_29]
- Modelling attentive listening during quiet time, where some of the children were talking and the teacher, along with the rest of the children, listened attentively [noted with caring and connecting; section 5.3.4.1; R.J_4]
- Modelling focusing during the second outing, where children were shown the bean plants [noted with quieting and focusing-section; section 5.3.1.2; F.V.T_29]
- Modelling reframing during the second outing, where DCM was not sure how to access the presented reality and LSE guided him [noted with seeing and reframing-fieldwork activities; section 5.3.2.2; F.O.S_29; F.V.T_43]

The following were also noted:

> I hurried to put on the candle and sat on a cushion myself next to a restless boy and held his hand showing him that it's time to calm down [modelling quieting and focusing R.J_5]
>
> [when cutting flowers] MA goes next to them [the children] and guide them towards taking care of nature [modelling insight F.V.T_29]

In addition, the aspect of applying the skill of observation as an educator, and its positive outcomes, was also seen through Ms Angie's journal reflections [R.J]. Upon reflecting on her practices she noticed that 'I might have been unconsciously comparing the present group with the previous ones [21]…I was not able to see the group from another lens.' [47] This reflection helped her to change her vision and mindset and said 'I cannot expect the same rhythm I'm used to when it comes to progress in terms of length of time in silence and co-operation…When I go through my observation cards and journal, I notice progress so that's were I should put my attention, and not in comparison.'[21] Throughout his work, Malaguzzi (1993a) mentions that a good observant educator is aware that s/he is capable of identifying instances from a situation and look at them through a different lens.

Whilst acknowledging that Ms. Emma was only informed about the aims of the study through the information sheet and did not take part in practising any form of positive silence and observation skills with the children, she connected with the observation employed during the outings where I was collecting field notes. In her general reflection [G.R_47] she notes that: "I was never skeptical about the importance of spending time observing the children and the relevance of 'the lack of interference'". This shows that as a person, and from a teacher's perspective, Ms. Emma values the importance of observation skills however she also notes that "I must admit that I do not always adopt this pedagogy due to several factors…[one of them being] the correlation between the limited time spent at school and curriculum to be covered". Notwithstanding, she finished her reflection by saying that, "these outings motivated me to…dedicate the adequate and more time to observing children's attitudes during the school year."

5.5 Discussing Research Findings

Since humans are complex beings there is no simple medium to get to the notions of silence and observation. In fact, silence in itself interacts with various dimensions of the human process not just as a cognitive process but also as connectedness, meaning and hence spirituality. This was evident in the literature and data collected.

Furthermore, the literature showed that when human beings, including children, are faced with an unknown reality or a diverse reality and they are required to act upon, they unconsciously involve themselves in an intertwined cognitive action practice. They process the given reality by looking around and see what it offers. They interpret it through their already acquired sociocultural knowledge by asking how the given reality is meaningful to the individual, and they access it by then interacting with the said reality. Often they would require 'tool mediation' to access the reality.

Taking a theoretical perspective of CHAT it can be noted from the analysis, that the children in the experimental group made use of the 'tool mediated' principle both in class and when encountering a new field during the fieldwork activities. Apart from using their already acquired sociocultural intangible tools, from family and society, they also enriched their ability to increase their symbolic repertoire and made use of those tangible and intangible tools rendered to them through in-class activities, in order to access the reality they were in. This concurs with the philosophy behind Gellel's (2018b) Symbol Literacy approach and also reflects Valsiner and Rosa's (2007) discussions on sociocultural psychology.

In her work Haskins (2010) is of the idea that,

> as long as our educational system remains standards-based and maintains a structure in which all students study the same thing at the same time, there will be little room for practices that support pause, pondering, or for breath-based exercises. Teachers who are persistently pressured to improve test scores will find it difficult to honor slowness, stillness, and silence (p.16)

However, Lees (2012b) disagrees with this by saying that the system "is still made up of people [so] all it takes…is for people to resist by stopping" (p. 97). The results from this study mirrors Lees's belief and shows that the teacher in the experimental group managed to practice silence, slowness, breathing exercises, stillness and observation with the children even though she forms part of a 'standards-based' educational system. In addition to this, it can be noted that the children in class (E) processed, interpreted and accessed reality using a positive philosophy through a culture of YES (Gallagher & Thordarson, 2018). This culture holds positive silence (Lees, 2012b), views children as human beings and 'reasonable person[s]'

Trevarthen (2011), favours holistic learning (Gelb, 2004; Gellel 2018b), and supports the importance of engaging in conversation (Romeo et al., 2018). Furthermore, the said children also employed the internalisation and externalisation principle by using the skills of silence and observation through, for example, empathy, co-operation, reframing and communication features such as gestures, speech and the words used. The same could not be reported for the children in the control group since although it could be noted that some of the children made use of the 'tool mediated' principle, the very few intangible tools exhibited, in relation to silence and observation, were only from their already acquired sociocultural symbolic repertoire.

5.5.1 Silence and Observation deepen Attention and Emotions (Positive Viewpoint)

Throughout the analysis it was demonstrated how the practice of positive silence and observation deepen attention. Within various instances, the children in the experimental group showed that they processed reality by being able to place their attention on something and hold on to it by observing. The silence technique employed by Ms. Angie aided in expanding this focusing/attention ability. As reported in [R.J_1] she made use of this quiet time as a mediating tool to promote silence and observation and used tangible tools such as the singing bowl. Apart from their rich historical roots, the curved shape of this tool, as well as that of the tingsha cymbals also relates to the fact that children favour symmetrical curved shapes than uneven ones. This was noted through the works of Tzourio-Mazoyer et al., (2002) and Fontana (1994). Furthermore, as noted by Ms Angie, given its frequent practice and having 'the children expect[ing] it and ask for it' [R.J_38], the silence technique in a way became a class ritual and eventually became a common thing for the children to relate with reality and process it. This concurs with the discussions made in Chapter 2 that rituals at times become habits and that these "rituals do not just enrich [a] life but even shape [an] identity" (Cooke & Macy, 2005, p. 3). In addition, from the analysis it could be noted that children processed their reality through observation [F.O.S_29]. The mindfulness practice seemed to enhance the capability of getting into detail and to go deeper. This ties in with Herman's (2017), Lees's

(2012b), Gelb's (2004), and Haskin's (2011) work whereby they all tackled the notion of going deeper.

As seen through the literature, art, myths, narratives and rituals are ways how people socially started understanding the world around them. However, unfortunately, because of "the consequent loss of basic symbol literacy", due to a rapid life and technological influx, "we are losing intergenerational wisdom that we received from time immemorial" (Gellel, 2010, p. 47). This is why, in this study, a sociocultural psychology was looked into and an epistemology of a sociocultural nature was adopted. This is also reflected in the empirical research and depicted through the data showing children in class (E) enjoying having the space and time to recount some of their home experiences [F.N_8]. Thus apart from processing reality through attention and observation, they interpreted reality by connecting with previous knowledge through the 'here and now' (Hay & Nye, 2006) and the 'line mode' (Donaldson, 1992). Children were accessing knowledge from past events and make use of it in the present reality [F.N_8].

As Lees (2012b) notes "journeying with silence is unique to each individual and each setting" (p. 86). Very often silence is used in order to aid children slow down, be mindful, reflective and engage with cultural objects and reality. Through analysis it was perceived that the experimental group children accessed reality through calmness and adequate listening. They enjoyed having others listening to them and they attentively listened to others too [R.J_4; I.O.S_4] In addition, they accessed their reality, at school and outdoors, in a calm manner and thus engaged with acquisition of new knowledge [R.J_38; F.V.T_43]. Furthermore, the recognition and expression of different emotions was also observed as a means for children accessing reality. These ranged from serenity, 'calmly looks at the surroundings' [F.O.S_29], to excitement 'calls others to see it' [F.O.S_29] to sadness 'DGM gets upset' [F.V.T_43]. Kaiser Greenland (2016) mentions that the practices of mindfulness and meditation help human beings in the development of the three main qualities of attention, balance and compassion. Through these three qualities individuals will be able to steer life's conflicts using more tenderness and wisdom.

5.5.2 Silence and Observation deepen Insight, Empathy and Co-operation (Tool Mediation & Sociocultural Perspective)

Humans "acquire resources to make sense of what goes on around [them] and make sense of [their] experience in the complexity of socio-cultural life" (Valsiner & Rosa, 2007, p. 17). It is worth recalling how during the third outing, children in class (E), instead of squashing a beetle, JSM put it back in a safe place [F.O.S_29] and how DCM managed to stay in the field and walk around [F.V.T_43]. This shows how children, after adequate guidance, processed the given reality with an open mind, through compassion and by perceiving instances innately. This aligns with the idea discussed through literature that mindfulness aid individuals to 'look with fresh eyes' and brings about 'cognitive change' (Kaiser Greenland, 2010, p. 64; Hooker & Fodor, 2008, p. 80). Furthermore, the matter that a positive shift was noted with regards to an inclination towards nature appreciation [F.V.T_43] shows that the children used their 'eyes to see with wisdom' (Lees, 2012b, p. 116).

According to Lees (2012b), "silence is the platform upon which new things can happen, discoveries can be made, [and] people can re-imagine" (p. 107). Although the children's development was in its early stages, certain episodes and discourses noted through analysis suggest that their skills of watching, listening, interpreting and responding to other's views matured. A dominant case in point, with the experimental group, was JSM's attitude and development in these skills that persisted throughout a good time of the study but towards the end showed a more reasonable reframing mindset. This aligns with the notion that mindfulness is linked to a way with how children interact with the environment and social constructs (Kaiser Greenland, 2010). Therefore, it can be said that the children interpreted reality through insight, reframing and thinking outside the box and also through empathy and intuition. These were noted along various instances throughout the study, for example one instance depicts the children's thoughtfulness of being thankful to their parents for taking care of them [F.N_3].

Rogoff (1995) sees apprenticeship, guided participation and participatory appropriation "not as separate or as hierarchical, but as simply involving different grains of focus with the whole sociocultural activity" (p. 141). Hence, this is the

reason why this section holds an interwoven discussion perceiving components in the previous sections as working together, including that of the environment. Rogoff's (1995) description of participatory appropriation can be linked to the ways in which the children in this study accessed reality. She states that participatory appropriation refers to instances where children "changed and handled a later situation in ways prepared by their own participation in the previous situation" (Rogoff, 1995, p. 142). In this light, the first and second fieldwork activities were a build up of skills towards the third fieldwork activity for the children in class (E). Although the gist of the skills was being strengthened through in-class activities, the children were developing the skill of connectedness with each fieldwork activity. In fact, the analysis clearly illustrates that by the third fieldwork activity, the children arrived at the conclusion that if they work together and join ideas they could access reality in a much better way. A case in point is depicted in F.V.T_43 whereby DGM, who was initially working alone collecting stones, got upset when NGM and LNM took his stones to place them on the towered stones – placed there by other pupils. However, he then joined the rest of his classmates. He noted that by working together with the others, the piled up towered stones could increase and they would have a higher tower. Therefore, the children accessed reality by co-operation and insight hence acknowledging that they will be learning from new experiences.

5.5.3 Silence and Observation deepen Awe & Wonder, Questioning and Creativity (Holistic)

"Children need to have time to meander, to observe, to wonder…[and] to ponder the night sky" (Haskins, 2011, p. 35). As seen from the analysis, the skills of silence and observation can be considered as the basis of pondering and wondering. The children in the experimental group exhibited astonishing feelings when they saw and listened to the sound of the singing bowl for the first time [I.V.T_15]. Furthermore, DCM was particularly in awe in front of the candle and its flickering flame. These 'mediating tools' aroused curiosity in the children [R.J_7] and therefore it can be deducted that the children in this study processed reality through curiosity, awe and wonder.

As outlined in Chapter 3, curiosity arouses our ability to question (Engel, 2015).

When humans do so, they use also their creativity in order to engage with creative problem solving (Gelb 2004). Gellel (2018b) argues that, “wonder and questioning techniques are tools that help the children note the details and makes them delve deeper into the meaning” (p. 118). This relates to the observed behaviour exhibited by the children in class (E). When they got curious, they set forward questions in order to satiate their curiosity and understand further [I. O.S_1; I. O.S_4]. LNM questioned about the soil and why there is soil in the earth. The LSE guided him to see the solution [I.V.T_0]. Furthermore, during conversations, Ms Angie prompted children with adequate questions in order to incite creative problem solving [F.N_10; F.N_11]. Lees (2012a) suggests that:

> nature and the outdoors are the source of silence because they are natural and, humanly or as humans made of nature, we encounter the natural as just that, which means it is less likely to cause concerns that mitigate against a silent state of mind – which is harmonious – being achieved (p. 8).

Being silent helps humans to thoroughly observe and therefore be able to set questions that might require higher order thinking skills to be answered. Therefore, through these matters it can be said that the children in this study interpreted reality through questioning and creative problem solving skills.

Zittoun & Glăveanu (2018) state that “people think not in isolation or only in their mind” (p. 3) but they imagine together. When they go through the process of imagination they,

> bring to mind stories from the past [and] envision what will happen in the near of distant future…[then they] ‘reconnect’ with [their] here and now (again, symbolically, as indeed experience of the immediate environment still goes on while imagining), and depend [their] motives for imagining and the situation [they] are in. [Thus they], either continue or change [their] actions accordingly (pp. 359-360)

The data from this study showed how the children in class (E) exhibited this and engaged in holistic learning and development. It should be noted that, by pinpointing that mindfulness “nurtures greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of present-moment reality” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4), it does not mean that children who do not practice mindfulness do not nurture self-awareness and connect with the inner spirituality. It simply shows that when one practices mindfulness it extra

ignites the nurturing of such self-awareness. In fact, as already noted, the children in the control group also made use of Zittoun & Glăveanu's (2018) concept mentioned above but using a different approach.

The analysis also showed how the environment became their 'third teacher' (Malaguzzi, 1993b) and instigated 'cognitive dynamic of imagination' (Zittoun & Glăveanu, 2018, p. 354). Through in-class activities, such as, Not a Box, it was seen how the children made use of their imagination to come up with solutions [I.V.T_37]. Moreover, the fact that GMF was observed using words indicating that she is busy and has to cook [F.O.S_43], shows how "external dialogues foster inner dialogicality and lead to the construction of unique constellations of experience, beliefs, motives, and emotions" (Zittoun & Glăveanu, 2018, p. 349). Therefore, with all these notions it can be said that the experimental group children accessed reality through imagination and creativity.

5.5.4 Silence and Observation deepen Teacher's Philosophy (Behaviour)

As seen through Kaiser Greenland (2010) and Srinivasan's (2014) work, children emulate and notice all aspects of their classroom teacher and at times become their reflection. One particular example of how this factor was reflected in the empirical study is the LSE's behaviour, of the experimental group, and how she worked with DCM and guided him in reframing the situation during the outings. This was very much in contrast with the behavior of the LSE in the control group when working with LXM [F.O.S_29; F.V.T_43; F.O.S_43]. The LSE's behaviour left an impact on how children accessed the reality. In relation to Vygotsky's ZPD and tool mediation, DCM's LSE was a mediating tool herself and guided him to access reality whilst LXM's LSE gave him no further assistance with reframing once he showed 'boredom' and instead just took him out of the field to a different place. Therefore, she did not guide him to reprocess and access the given reality but instead modeled a behaviour of flight.

On the other hand, as clearly perceived in the literature reviewed, if the classroom teacher cultivates the skills of silence and observation as a life philosophy, the chances that they may be used as pedagogical tools and that the children will

engage with them are higher. This was reflected in the empirical study. Section 5.4 offers diverse instances through which the experimental group children could emulate positive silence and observation. Naumburg (2015) mentions that, “in order to teach mindfulness to [children], you must start with yourself” (p. 16). The fact that both Ms Angie and the LSE in her classroom see positive silence and observation as a life philosophy, they indirectly promoted a culture of YES and helped the children to process, interpret and access reality with a positive perspective. Furthermore, the fact that in her reflection Ms. Emma stated that, the outings held due to this study motivated her to dedicate more time in observing the children’s behavior [G.R_47], exhibits a positive outcome of this study.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented an analysis and discussion of the data from this study and the key insights that arose. I began with a brief explanation of the approach taken towards data interpretation, providing a code of reference for each method of data collected as well as codes for children and teachers to ensure anonymity. This was followed by an explication of the procedure by which six main themes emerged. I then provided pre-definitions of the emergent nodes so as to situate my understanding as a researcher in relation to the concepts being explored in the study. Subsequently, I outlined the six main themes including the presentation of results for each theme along with an analysis. Each theme was first explored in relation to the in-class activities held with the children in class (E), so as to see growth in the skills of silence and observation. This was then followed by the analysis and comparison, in relation to the three fieldwork activities, of the skills used by the children in class (E) to process, interpret and access reality, along with those used by the children in class (C) and thus determine if the skills of silence and observation served as pedagogical tools with the children in class (E). Consequently, a general discussion of the main research findings in parallel with the literature reviewed was made. This was done by framing the two research questions and the six emergent themes in relation to the pedagogical tools of silence and observation

as processing, interpreting and accessing reality. This served as an overall link to Part A and Part B of this study.

Conclusion

"giving themselves enough breathing room to take in what's happening in their inner and outer worlds, children can identify both their talents and their challenges"
(Kaiser Greenland, 2010, p. 18)

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to seek to answer the following two research questions:

(iii) Can silken and observation be used a pedagogical tools to promote cognitive processing and the acquisition of new knowledge?, and

(iv) If silence and observation are pedagogical tools, in what way do they help the child to process, interpret and access reality?

It also aimed at providing fresh knowledge and insight for educators to grow professionally. This chapter offers a summary of the research conducted and main findings. It also offers implications for practice followed by the limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

Summary of the Research and Main Findings

Having adopted a theoretical framework to answer the first research question assured a solid basis for the development of an empirical study to tackle the second research question. Since the empirical study in itself tackled a process of children socially acquiring new knowledge and using it as a vision to access reality, the study embraced an epistemology of a sociocultural nature. Hence, from a theoretical perspective, CHAT was adopted. The study formed part of a collaborative action research practice which applied a quasi-experimental design by using convenience sampling. Furthermore, given that the whole study was seen as a process and a journey rather than a means to an end (Robertson, 2008), a qualitative approach was adopted with data gathered through participant and naturalistic observations.

The study was conducted with two kindergarten 1 classes, their respective qualified early childhood educators and the fourteen, three to four year old, mixed gender

children in their classroom. Although the children attended school in a different building and location, both schools were homogeneous and pertained to an allied school organisation. One of the classes, to which no treatment was applied, served as a control group, while the other class served as an experimental group. The developed CHAT framework adopted for this study reflected the research process and the two main chosen techniques used as mediated tools were positive silence and observation. These actions/tools, both tangible (e.g. singing bowl) and intangible (e.g. focusing), were mostly promoted by the collaborative teacher and myself, along the activities held in class and based on Kaiser Greenland's (2016) model of mindfulness activities. The fact that the collaborative teacher was an active practitioner of positive silence and observation, proved to be an important factor. The actions/tools aided in the delivery of the goals (e.g. learn how to focus and direct attention) and thus reach the activity/motive of this study. Therefore, this helped me to determine whether silence and observation has indeed allowed children to process, interpret and access reality in a different way.

Following data collection, findings were analysed through an inductive and thematic approach. A coding procedure was used in order to identify individual nodes from the gathered data. In addition, similar nodes were attached together to form themes which fall under the two key notions of silence and observation.

The following six themes emerged from the data gathered, 'quieting and focusing', 'seeing and reframing', 'emotions', 'caring and connecting', 'awe, wonder and questioning', and 'imitation and imagination'. In addition, another distinctive yet related theme that arose was, 'teacher's behaviour'. These themes were then analysed and discussed and the findings showed that the children indeed made use of the tool mediation skills of silence and observation to process, interpret and access reality. These mostly emerged through:

- *deepening of attention and emotions*, which contributed towards the usage of a positive viewpoint through a culture of YES promoting holistic learning;
- *deepening insight, empathy and co-operation* which contributed towards a sociocultural philosophy that views people not as inactive members

expecting the world around them to initiate relevant practices for them, but, creating their understanding of the world through their communications with others;

- *deepening awe & wonder, questioning and creativity* which contributed towards the holistic growth of the children.

Furthermore, the results indicated that the use of silence and observation as pedagogical tools may aid to deepen the teacher's philosophy towards one of a positive mind set and therefore model positive silence.

Even though conclusions from this study cannot be drawn with certainty, due to the nature of the study, as well as, due to the numerable variables, the preceding results do indicate that if children are mindful they can delve into the reality around them in a deeper manner. In addition, if children acquire this ability and it becomes part of their way of thinking, the children will be in a better position to process, interpret and access their reality from a positive perspective. As Kaiser Greenland (2010) states, "with such minds children are better able to define what they want to do and achieve the goals they set for themselves. With such minds children will be ready to change the world for the better" (p. 18).

Implications for Practice

As the Maltese proverb goes '*bil-qatra l-qatra timtela l-ġarra*' [drop after drop, a whole pitcher is filled]. Unfortunately, at times in a hierarchical system it gets more difficult for things to change from top to bottom hence why having educators embrace positive silence will lead to a change in schools and the mainstream educational system (Lees, 2012b; Mindful Schools, n.d.).

Suggestions for Teachers

Through literature and practice this study showed how every time an educator believes in the educational benefits that positive silence and observation skills bring along with them, is one step closer towards a positive change for a healthy educational system. Taking this into consideration, it is recommended that

educators cultivate such beliefs and implement them in their daily practices. Allowing time for themselves and the children, for silence and observation, not only enriches the children's development but educators would also be providing time for listening, pondering and reflection (Haskins, 2011). It is also recommended that teachers keep a personal diary/journal of their professional practices, since re-reading it will put the educator in a better position to thoroughly reflect on one's practice and therefore be able to look at classroom situations from a different point of view. Subsequently, if teachers model good silence and observation practices and their related skills such as empathy and reframing, children will mirror such behavior and will be able to enrich their symbolic repertoire. Lastly, if teachers nurture a less teacher-talk classroom philosophy and engage in back and forth conversations with pupils (Romeo et al., 2018), they will be fostering holistic learning, improved cognitive processing, creativity and child agency.

Suggestions for Schools

Although educators on their own can make a difference in their classroom, research and studies clearly show that more positive outcomes can be achieved when the school administration offers full support, and foster a whole school approach. Therefore, it is suggested that every school should be encouraged to take mindful experiences and activities on board since this stimulates the children's intellectual development. It is also desirable that the administration in collaboration with the teachers, work towards common targets that build a distinct education environment which leads to a fresh approach. This can be achieved by letting go of the 'Victorian' way of silence (Lees, 2012b) and instead redefine the school's ethos and philosophy to one which promotes a culture of YES with positive silence and observation as its pedagogical tools. Furthermore, this culture will offer further benefits if as a whole school system, administration and teachers cultivate, in their approach, an environment which fosters curiosity, question-asking skills and open mindedness. Equipping children with the techniques of silence and observation will also aid holistic development (Lees, 2012b). If all school agents keep in mind Malaguzzi's (1993a/b) concept that the environment is the third teacher, children will further be

encouraged to be accountable for their learning. Additionally, nurturing a positive attitude towards an early childhood education that supports naturalistic surroundings and quality outings, in desirable natural ambiences, will motivate young children to demonstrate agency.

Suggestions for Curriculum Evolvement

Kaiser Greenland (2010) mentioned that,

> the traditional ABCs of reading, writing, and arithmetic that served us well for generations don't serve us fully anymore. Helping kids build strong academic skills is fantastic, but that's just one way of many elements that make a well-rounded education (p. 18).

The skills required for tomorrow's jobs differ from yesterday's and today's. Hence the education system has the duty to be faithful to the children's right of having an adequate education that equips them with the necessary tools in order to be fully prepared in accessing tomorrow's world. Therefore, it is recommended that the curriculum, especially that related to the early years, focus more on equipping young children in becoming holistic and autonomous learners by embracing content that is relevant to their day-to-day and forthcoming life, as well as enriching their symbolic repertoire to be used as symbolic resource during transitions (Zittoun, 2007). One way of achieving this is by integrating the symbol literacy approach, which in itself is holistic and thus easily intertwined into other curricular areas. Furthermore, it coincides with the National Curriculum Framework by the Ministry for Education and Employment (2012) that early years education is "linked to the holistic development which occurs through informal and formal settings, planned and spontaneous activities, structure and unstructured events" (p. 45). As seen from literature, the symbol literacy project acknowledges that human beings live within a symbolic reality. However, due to the importance given to factual knowledge and living a hurried life, individuals are losing the ability of connecting to such a reality. In this regards, the project seeks to educate children and adults to develop in a socially constructive way, mostly one that encourages higher order thinking skills and 'offers children building of cultural capital'. Moreover, it provides opportunities which promote the acquisition of diverse skills, such as, silence, observation, reading of paintings and questioning techniques, which "amongst the recurrent

didactic tools [are] used by the symbol literacy approach" (Gellel, 2018b, p. 117). Lastly, it is advisable that the designed curriculum is flexible in nature whereby rather than being controlled by textbooks, they are used only as guidance. This will leave ample room and time for the professional educator to, collaborate with other educational agents in the schools, have time to be inspired and creative and hence provide an engaging environment for the students that promotes apprenticeship, guided participation and participatory appropriation (Rogoff, 1995).

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

A particular limitation in view of sociocultural theory (Valsiner & Rosa, 2007; Zittoun 2007), which might have influenced the practice is that, the agents involved had the same mind set. In order to acquire a deeper insight of the issue being researched, it would have been advantageous had the study involved parents/guardians. This is because, if involved, there would have been a greater possibility that the same positive culture is also nurtured at home. Therefore, it would have provided a richer perspective on the ways that the pedagogical tools of silence and observation can be used as tool mediation to process, interpret and access reality. Subsequently, further research could include introducing parents/guardians to the philosophy behind a positive culture and how it can become a family culture and nurtured at home. This could be done through short group meetings to further embrace such a philosophy and experience its benefits first hand.

In this study, the children were actively involved in the activities and they mostly led how an activity proceeded. Therefore, it would have been beneficial if the concept of 'taking the child's perspective' (Nilsson et al., 2013) was further applied especially in the viewpoint taken for analysing data. For future research, it is recommended that data is analysed from the children's perspective and not from the researcher's thinking of the children's perspectives. This is so since the concept of child agency in data analysis shows that most often a researcher's predefinition of notions taken for analysis are different than the children's definition of the same notions (Nilsson et al., 2013). Therefore, this will provide richer outcomes.

As a final recommendation for further research, Chapter 2 provides information that

enables other researchers to reproduce this study and expand upon it by introducing a Symbol Literacy Activity. Therefore, instead of the pupils being taken to the countryside as part of the fieldwork activities, they could be taken to the museum. Through such an activity, the ways that the tools of silence and observation would have helped the students to process, interpret and access reality, when engaging with a variety of symbol literacy activities, could be analysed.

Conclusion

Tackling the subject of positive silence and observation, which is an ancient practice in itself, and the Symbol Literacy Project, which provides the opportunity for young children to celebrate and engage with their community's culture, is a step towards a future where our children, insightfully, will be able to interact with the wisdom of past generations as expressed mainly through culture. As Valsiner and Rosa's (2007) stated:

> [it becomes] a result of the internalisation of (social) communication with semiotic materials (cultural), accumulated along the (historical) past of the cultural group, and so [children will be] capable of planning ahead and transforming the future. (p.8)

In addition, the two main assertions of the Symbol Literacy Approach are that humans live in a symbolic reality and that they employ various reasoning processes in order to learn. These processes are not necessarily being valued and nurtured by the formal education system, thus the approach aims at enhancing children's thinking and engagement by helping them develop a richer symbolic repertoire (Gellel, 2018b). This research equipped the children with the skills of silence and observation, which potentially enriched their ability to increase their symbolic repertoire. Therefore, it can be stated that if children engage with these tools in schools, they will have a richer experience when engaging with the activities pertaining to the Symbol Literacy Project. Silence and observation would assist them to better read a painting, creatively connect with its narrative and use the adequate cognitive processing skills to transfer its meaning to the present sociocultural moment.

Notwithstanding, even though there is a long tradition of reflection and writing on the benefits of silence, including the ability of the individual to connect with self and the surrounding, the study of silence and observation within the education sector is still emerging and more studies, possibly of a quantitative nature, are needed. Although this study's results are promising, one has to keep in mind that this is "an ongoing process of…planting the seeds,…which calls on us to continually share the concepts and practices…with our children in the hope that over time, the ideas will take root and grow" (Naumburg, 2015, p. 14).

One of the driving forces throughout this study, for me, stems from Srinivasan's (2014) words, "striving to embody the practice by being the change is what will ultimately transform education" (p. 26). I consider the work in this study as an added step, promisingly in the appropriate route. Apart from employing the practice in an educational setting, experiencing a positive outcome and providing fresh knowledge and insight for educators to grow professionally, the whole research was a process in itself and the start of a continuous journey. The activation of my life journey as the researcher has enriched my symbolic repertoire and allowed me to further grow holistically. The teachers' and children's life journey was also affected, since they too were gifted with mediating tools which will enrich their abilities to increase their symbolic repertoire throughout their lives. Furthermore, apart from contributing towards this emerging concept, this study assisted in "build[ing] a picture of education as connected to a new tool [which] is unusual in both its ordinariness and its special nature" (Lees, 2012b, p. xviii).

Henceforth, I conclude this dissertation following Lees's (2012b) footsteps,

> "I will not fill this space...I leave it open: to honour the fact that the beauty and value of silence [and observation] in schools in action is not about talking" (p. 126)

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Appendix 1

FREC and UREC Approval

Applicant's email: Index No:

To be completed by Faculty Research Ethics Committee

We have examined the above proposal and advise

Acceptance **Refusal** **Conditional Acceptance**

For the following reason/s:

Signature: AMB Date: 28/9/17.

To be completed by University Research Ethics Committee

We have examined the above proposal and advise

Acceptance **Refusal** **Conditional Acceptance**

For the following reason/s:

Signature: Date: 24/10/2017

Appendix 2

Permission Letter to Secretariat for Catholic Education

Dear Fr. Mallia,

As you may be aware I am reading for a Master of Education in Symbol Literacy at the University of Malta. For my dissertation, conducted under the supervision of Professor Adrian-Mario Gellel, I intend to explore how the techniques of ósilenceô and óobservationô may improve childrenôs awareness and ability to better interpret reality. The study intends to investigate the pedagogical benefit of silence and observation for three year old children. This will be done through a collaborative action research along with participant and naturalistic observations. The data obtained will inform recommendations for further research and practice for educational professionals working in an early childhood classroom setting. In order to address the research question, a qualitative approach has been chosen and I would need two professionals acting as kindergarten 1 teachers and in possession of a Bachelor degree in Education. I will be working with two classes (one as the experimental and one as the control group) in order to answer my research question. The teacher of the experimental group will be my co researcher. She will make use of silence and observation games in her activities and she will be given a journal to record her own reflections and observations throughout the whole study. The children in both classes will also be participating in fieldwork activities (outings). During these fieldwork activities I will be observing the childrenôs interaction with the environment.

I would like permission to conduct my research in two church schools in order to recruit participants for my research.

Please note that:

- Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without having to provide an explanation for their withdrawal. Their data would then not be used.
- Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and one is free to decline participation.
- Data will be gathered on normal educational practice and will have no change in curriculum or assessment.
- Participants will be made aware that pseudonyms will be used however while confidentiality will be guaranteed, anonymity cannot be promised in this research.
- All collected raw data will only be seen by myself and my supervisor.
- Gathered data will be through participant and naturalistic observation, field notes and multi-modal methods including photographs and video recording.
- All data, including audio, photos and video recordings will be securely stored on a password protected hard drive and will be destroyed two years after the end of the study.

Sincerely,

Natalie Lombardi Calleja

Researcher: Natalie Lombardi Calleja

natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt

Contact No: +356 79266205

Supervisor: Prof. Adrian Mario Gellel

adrian.gellel@um.edu.mt

Appendix 3e

Permission Letter to Head of School

Dear _____,

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at your school. I am currently reading for a Master of Education in Symbol Literacy at the University of Malta, and am in the process of writing my dissertation. This study, *Silence and Observation in early childhood education. The Pedagogical basis of a Symbol Literacy Approach*, conducted under the supervision of Professor Adrian-Mario Gellel, intend to explore how techniques of ósilenceô and óobservationô may improve childrenôs awareness and ability to better interpret reality. The study intends to investigate the pedagogical benefit of silence and observation for three year old children. This will be done through a collaborative action research along with participant and naturalistic observations. The data obtained will inform recommendations for further research and practice for educational professionals working in an early childhood classroom setting.

I am asking your permission to contact Ms [redacted], an Early Childhood teacher, who is in possession of a Bachelor Degree in Education to participate in the study. She will conduct a short silence or observation activity everyday, till the end of February, of which I will observe the class once a week. She will also be given a journal diary to record her own reflections and observations throughout the whole study and she will also act as my co researcher. In addition to this, with your kind permission, I would like to organise a set of three fieldwork activities with the class that will be held outside school, on different dates, one during the first term and two during the second term. I would appreciate if you would kindly confirm whether these arrangements meet your approval and provide me with suitable dates. During these three fieldwork activities, I will be observing the childrenôs interaction with the new environment. To aid my research, I would also like to photograph and video the children during the activities, with the parent/custodianôs consent which will be asked for in the information letter. The images and footage will only by used by myself for in depth note taking. Furthermore, all data, including audio, photos and video recordings will be securely stored on a password protected hard drive and will be destroyed two years after the end of the study.

Ms [redacted] will be given an information letter and a consent form (copies enclosed) to be signed and returned to the primary researcher. An information letter and consent form will also be given to the parents/custodians of the children in the teachersô classroom (copies enclosed) to be signed and returned to the primary researcher. In addition, before the study commences, a verbal description of the research study will be given to the pupils in the teachersô classroom using simple words before seeking their assent.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me at: natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt

Sincerely,

Natalie Lombardi Calleja

Researcher: Natalie Lombardi Calleja

natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt

Contact No: +356 79266205

Supervisor: Prof. Adrian Mario Gellel

adrian.gellel@um.edu.mt

Appendix 3c

Permission Letter to Head of School

Dear _____,

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at your school. I am currently reading for a Master of Education in Symbol Literacy at the University of Malta, and am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study, *Silence and Observation in early childhood education. The Pedagogical basis of a Symbol Literacy Approach* is being conducted under the supervision of Professor Adrian Mario-Gellel. The study intends to investigate the pedagogical benefit of silence and observation for three year old children. This will be done through a collaborative action research along with participant and naturalistic observations. The data obtained will inform recommendations for further research and practice for educational professionals working in an early childhood classroom setting.

I am requesting your permission to recruit Ms [redacted], an Early Childhood teacher, who is in possession of a Bachelor Degree in Education, and her class children to participate in the study. The teacher and her class are needed to act as a control group for the quasi experimental design of the study. For this reason, with your kind permission, I would like to organise a set of two fieldwork activities with the class that will be held outside school, on different dates, one during the first term and one during the second term. I would appreciate if you would kindly confirm whether these arrangements meet your approval and provide me with suitable dates. During these two fieldwork activities, I will be observing the childrenôs interaction with the new environment. To aid my research, I would also like to photograph and video the children during the activities, with the parent/custodianôs consent which will be asked for in the information letter. The images and footage will only by used by myself for in depth note taking. Furthermore, all data, including audio, photos and video recordings will be securely stored on a password protected hard drive and will be destroyed two years after the end of the study.

Ms [redacted] will be given an information letter and a consent form (copies enclosed) to be signed and returned to the primary researcher. An information letter and consent form will also be given to the parents/custodians of the children in the teachersô classroom (copies enclosed) to be signed and returned to the primary researcher. In addition, before the study commences, a verbal description of the research study will be given to the pupils in the teachersô classroom using simple words before seeking their assent.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. Should you have any queries, please contact me at: natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt and I will be very happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

Natalie Lombardi Calleja

Researcher: Natalie Lombardi Calleja

natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt

Contact No: +356 79266205

Supervisor: Prof. Adrian Mario Gellel

adrian.gellel@um.edu.mt

Appendix 4e

Information Letter for Teacher (Experimental Group)

Dear Ms [redacted]

I am currently reading for a Master of Education in Symbol Literacy at the University of Malta, and am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is entitled: *Silence and Observation in early childhood education. The Pedagogical basis of a Symbol Literacy Approach.* I will be exploring how techniques of ósilenceô and óobservationô may heighten childrenôs awareness and ability to better interpret reality, under the supervision of Professor Adrian Mario Gellel.

I am aware that you already make use of silence techniques with your class and that you strongly believe in the pedagogical benefits of this technique. I would like to invite you to collaborate with me in order to address the research question by allowing me

i. to plan with you different sessions that make use of silence and observation techniques
ii. to observe a number of the above mentioned sessions
iii. to plan with you three separate outings, one during the first term and two during the second term.

I would be grateful if during this period you collect your own notes so that you may reflect on the development that you observe/document.

During the outings I intend to observe childrenôs interaction with the environment and will gather data through field notes through different methods including photographs and video recording.

Any personal details will be confidential and all data collected will be anonymised. In order to secure this, all data, including audio, photos and video recordings will be destroyed two years after the end of the study.

Please note that should you agree to collaborate with me on this research:

- Your participation is entirely voluntary.
- Data will be gathered on normal educational practice and will not interfere with the daily educational practice of the class
- Pseudonyms for participants will be used.

Should you have any queries, please contact me at: natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt and I will be very happy to answer any questions that you may have.

If you agree to participate, kindly fill in the consent form below and return it to me.

Sincerely,

Natalie Lombardi Calleja

Researcher: Natalie Lombardi Calleja

natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt

Contact No: +356 79266205

Supervisor: Prof. Adrian Mario Gellel

adrian.gellel@um.edu.mt

Consent Form

After reading the information sheet and after discussing the research with Ms Lombardi Calleja I,

_____
Name of Collaborative Participant

i. I agree to collaborate with the researcher in this research project.
ii. I understand that there will be no deception in the data collection process of any form.
iii. My real name/identity will not be used at any point in the study.
iv. I will keep a journal diary with my reflections and fill in related checklists throughout the project.
v. The fieldwork will be video recorded and that the researcher will collect data by keeping fieldnotes.
vi. The data collected will only be used for research purposes.
vii. All data, including audio, photos and video recordings will be destroyed two years after the end of the study.

_____ _____
Signature of Collaborative Participant Date

Researcher

I, _____ agree to the conditions. Date: _____
Natalie Lombardi Calleja

(natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt)

_____ Date: _____

Prof Adrian M. Gellel, dissertation supervision

(adrian.gellel@um.edu.mt)

Appendix 4c

Information Letter for Teacher (Control Group)

Dear Ms [redacted]

I am currently reading for a Master of Education in Symbol Literacy at the University of Malta, and am in the process of writing my dissertation. In this study, *Silence and Observation in early childhood education. The Pedagogical basis of a Symbol Literacy Approach*, conducted under the supervision of Professor Adrian-Mario Gellel, I intend to explore how techniques of ósilenceô and óobservationô may improve childrenôs awareness and ability to better interpret reality. The study intends to investigate the pedagogical benefit of silence and observation for three year old children. This will be done through a collaborative action research along with participant and naturalistic observations. The data obtained will inform recommendations for further research and practice for educational professionals working in an early childhood classroom setting.

In order to evaluate the validity of my data I need one Kindergarten 1 teacher and her class, who is in a possession of a Bachelor Degree in Education to participate in the study. You and your class will only be required to participate in two fieldwork activities outside school, one during the first term and the other one during the second term. During the fieldwork day, the children will be taken on an outing to a place in the countryside where they will have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the new environment. The children will be left free to roam around under adequate adult supervision including you. I will observe their interaction with the environment and data will be gathered through field notes and multi-modal methods including photographs and video recording. Any personal details will be confidential and all data collected will be anonymised. In order to secure this, all data, including audio, photos and video recording will be destroyed two years after the end of the study.

Please note that should you agree to participate in this research:

- Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary.
- Data will be gathered on normal educational practice and will not interfere with the daily educational practice of the class.
- Pseudonyms for participants will be used.

Should you have any queries, please contact me through my email address (natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt).

If you agree to participate, kindly fill in the consent form below and return it to me.

Sincerely,

Natalie Lombardi Calleja

Researcher: Natalie Lombardi Calleja

natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt

Contact No: +356 79266205

Supervisor: Prof. Adrian Mario Gellel

adrian.gellel@um.edu.mt

Consent Form

With this Consent Form I, Natalie Lombardi Calleja, promise to keep to the conditions listed in the information letter throughout the whole research process.

I, _____, by signing this consent form:

Name of Participant

i. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions,

ii. I agree to take part in the above study.

iii. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason without there being any consequences. In the case that I withdraw, all records and information collected will be destroyed.

iv. I understand that the researcher is bound by confidentiality but that given the research she cannot guarantee my anonymity.

v. The fieldwork will be video recorded.

vi. All data, including audio, photos and video recordings will be destroyed two years after the end of the study.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

Researcher

I, _____ agree to the conditions. Date: _____

Natalie Lombardi Calleja

(natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt)

_____ Date: _____

Prof Adrian M. Gellel, dissertation supervision

(adrian.gellel@um.edu.mt)

Appendix 5e

Information Letter for Parents/Guardians (Experimental Group)

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am currently reading for a Master of Education in Symbol Literacy at the University of Malta, and am in the process of writing my dissertation. Different studies show that silence techniques help children in various aspects of their life. Through this study, entitled *Silence and Observation in early childhood education. The Pedagogical basis of a Symbol Literacy Approach*, and conducted under the supervision of Professor Adrian-Mario Gellel, I intend to explore how techniques of ósilenceô and óobservationô may improve childrenôs awareness and ability to interpret reality.

In order to address the research question, I intend to observe a number of sessions conducted by Ms [redacted]. Furthermore, I also intend to collaborate with the teacher of your child to organise three outdoor activities. During these activities I shall observe and gather field notes through multi-modal methods including photographs and video recording to study how children interact with the environment.

Please rest assured that the study will not add any burden on your child nor will it interfere with the normal pedagogical activities that occur in his/her school. Any personal details will be confidential and all data collected will be anonymised. In order to secure this, all data, including audio, photos and video recordings will be destroyed two years after the end of the study.

I would appreciate if you grant your permission for me to observe and collect data from sessions and from the outings by signing the attached consent form and send it back to the school at your earliest convenience. Your child will be free to ask me to refrain from observing him/her or collecting data. However, in case that you do not give your consent I will refrain from observing your child and will omit any information that may involve your child from my field notes or collected data.

Should you have any queries, please contact me at: natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt and I will be very happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

Natalie Lombardi Calleja

Researcher: Natalie Lombardi Calleja

natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt

Contact No: +356 79266205

Supervisor: Prof. Adrian Mario Gellel

adrian.gellel@um.edu.mt

Consent Form for participation in the study

I, the undersigned, give my consent for the child under my care _____ (name of child in block letters) to participate in the research entitled: *Silence and Observation in early childhood education. The Pedagogical basis of a Symbol Literacy Approach.* For this study, the child will be part of a number of sessions that will involve observational experiences through silence which will be held with the whole class via the aid of simple activities. Furthermore, these activities will go hand in hand with normal educational practice and will have no change in curriculum or assessment.

I understand that:

i. The childôs real name/identity will not be used at any point in the study.
ii. All data, including audio, photos and video recordings will be destroyed two years after the end of the study.
iii. All information gathered during the study will be used for research purposes only.

Should I require any additional information, I may contact the researcher, being a co-teacher of the childôs classroom teacher, via email: natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt

I, _____(name), parent/guardian of

_____(childôs name), of class _____

- give my consent to Ms Lombardi to observe and collect field notes during silence and observation sessions as well as during the outdoor activity.
- give my consent to Ms Lombardi to collect data through video footage and/or photographs.
- give consent to Ms Lombardi to use and analyse the data for research purposes.
- give my consent to Ms Lombardi to make use and possibly publish in research publications (including the dissertation) drawings and/or quotations of my child.
- understand that at no point will the published data identify my child.
- understand that I can withdraw my consent at any given moment.
- understand that the childôs confidentaility will be assured.

Signature: _____

Researcher **University Supervisor**

_____ _____

Natalie Lombardi Calleja Prof Adrian M. Gellel

Date: _____

Ittra ta' informazzjoni lill-ġenituri/gwardjana (Grupp Esperimentali)

Għeżież ġenituri jew gwardjani,

Bħalissa ninsab għaddejja bi studju ta' Master fl-Edukazzjoni fil-qasam ta' 'Symbol Literacy' fi ħdan l-Università taʼ Malta. Diversi ricerki juru li l-użu tas-silenzju prattikat f'metodi differenti huwa ta' benefiċċju għat-tfal f'aspetti varji ta' ħajjithom. Għal dan il-proġett taʼ riċerka beħsiebni nagħmel studju bit-titlu: *Silence and Observation in early childhood education. The Pedagogical basis of a Symbol Literacy Approach*, taħt is-superviżjoni tal-Professur Adrian-Mario Gellel. B'dan il-proġett, jien ser neżamina kif metodoloġiji differenti ta' silenzju u osservazzjoni jistgħu jtejbu l-abbilta' sabiex jinterpretaw aħjar ir-realta' ta' madwarhom.

Sabiex tiġi eżegwita din ir-riċerka, se nkun qed nosserva numru ta' sessjonijiet li ser isiru minn Ms. [redacted] kif ukoll ser inkun qed naħdem id f'id mal-għalliema tat-tfel/ tifla tiegħek biex jiġu organizzati tliet attivitajiet barra mill-iskola. Waqt dawn l-attivitajiet, jien ser inkun qed nosserva u niġbor informazzjoni permezz ta' ritratti u vidjows bl-għan inkun nistaʼ nara kif it-tfal jaġixxu fi spazji ta' ambjent rurali.

Nixtieq nassigurak li r-riċerka mhux se jkollha l-ebda impatt mhux mixtieq fuq it-tfel/tifla jew toħloq interferenzja mar-rutina ta' attivititajiet li jsiru fl-iskola ta' kuljum. Kull informazzjoni miġbura ser tibqa kunfidenzjali u anonima. Kull informazzjoni miġbura waqt din ir-riċerka, inkluż awdjo, ritratti u vidjow ser tiġi distrutta fi żmien sentejn wara li r-ricerka tkun intemmet.

Naprezza jekk ittini l-kunsens tiegħek sabiex nosserva u niġbor informazzjoni mis-sessjonijiet kif ukoll l-attivitajiet li ser isiru barra mill-iskola billi tiffirma l-formola tal-kunsens mehmuża u tibgħatha liskola mill-aktar fis possibbli. Waqt din ir-ricerka it-tifel/ tifla jistgħu jiddeciedu li ma jkunux osservati jew parteċipi iżjed f'dan l-istudju. Madanakollu, fil-każli inti ma tagħtix il-kunsens tiegħek mill-bidu, jien mhux ser inkun qed nosserva t-tifel/tifla tiegħek u nħalli informazzjoni dwar it-tifel/tifla barra mill-istudju.

Jekk għandek xi mistoqsijiet tistaʼ tikkuntatjani bl-imejl fuq: natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt

Dejjem tiegħek,

Natalie Lombardi Calleja

RiċerkattriċI: Natalie Lombardi Calleja

natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt

Numru: +356 79266205

SuperviżUr: Prof. Adrian Mario Gellel

adrian.gellel@um.edu.mt

Kunsens għal riċerka mat-tfal

Jien, hawn taħt iffirmat, nagħti l-kunsens għat-tifel/tifla taħt il-protezzjoni tiegħi _____ (isem it-tifel/tifla, bl-ittri kapitali) biex jipparteċipa/tipparteċipa fir-riċerka bl-isem: *Silence and Observation in early childhood education. The Pedagogical basis of a Symbol Literacy Approach*. Għal dan l-istudju, it-tifel/tifla ser ikun/tkun parti minn numru taʼ sessjonijiet li ser jinvolvu esperjenzi taʼ osservazzjoni permezz tas-silenzju u li se jiġu mwassla mal-klassi kollha permezz taʼ attivitajiet sempliċi. Dawn l-attivitajiet ser jiġu eċiegwiti in konformita` mal-prattiċi tal-edukazzjoni normali u mhux ser ikollhom ebda effett fuq il-kurrikulum jew assessjar.

Jien nifhem illi:

iv. L-isem jew l-identita` tat-tifel/tifla mhux ser ikunu wieħed fl-ebda parti tal-istudju.
v. Kull informazzjoni miġbura waqt din ir-riċerka, inkluż awdjo, ritratti u vidjow ser tiġi distrutta fi żmien sentejn wara li r-ricerka tkun intemmet.
vi. L-informazzjoni kollha miġbura waqt dan l-istudju ser tintuża biss għal skopijiet ta` riċerka.

Jekk niġi bżonn kwalunkwa informazzjoni oħra, nista` nikkuntatja r-riċerkatriċi, li hija ukoll co-għalliema tal-għalliema tal-klassi tat-tifel/tifla, permezz tal-imejl: natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt

Jiena, _____(isem), ġenitur/gwardjan ta`

_____(isem tat-tifel/tifla), li jinsab fi klassi _____

- nagħti l-kunsens lil Ms Lombardi biex tosserva u tiġbor informazzjoni waqt is-sessjonijiet taʼ silenzju u osservazzjoni, kif ukoll, waqt l-attivitajiet li ser iseħħu barra mill-iskola.
- nagħti l-kunsens lil Ms Lombardi biex tiġbor informazzjoni permezz taʼ vidjows u ritratti.
- nagħti l-kunsens lil Ms Lombardi biex tuża u tanalizza l-informazzjoni miġbura għal skopijiet taʼ riċerka
- nagħti l-kunsens lil Ms Lombardi biex tuża u possibilment tippublika fiċ-ċrki (inkluz dan l-istudju) tpinġijiet jew kwotazzjonijiet tat-tifel/tifla.
- nifhem li l-informazzjoni ippublikata mhix ser tidentifika lit-tifel/tifla
- nifhem li nista` nirtira l-parteċipazzjoni meta rrid
- nifhem li l-kunfidenzjalita` tat-tifel/tifla ser tkun imħarsa u garantita.

Firma: _____

Riċerkatriċi

_____
Natalie Lombardi Calleja

Superviżur ta` l-Universita`

_____
Prof Adrian M. Gellel

Data: _____

Appendix 5c

Information Letter for Parents/Guardians (Control Group)

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am currently reading for a Master of Education in Symbol Literacy at the University of Malta, and am in the process of writing my dissertation. Through this study, entitled *Silence and Observation in early childhood education: The Pedagogical basis of a Symbol Literacy Approach*, and conducted under the supervision of Professor Adrian-Mario Gellel, I intend to explore how techniques of ósilenceô and óobservationô may improve childrenôs awareness and ability to interpret reality.

In order to address the research question, with your permission and help I intend to organise two outdoor activities outside school, on different dates. These activities will go hand in hand with normal educational practice and will not interfere with the normal practice of your childôs class.

During the fieldwork day, the children will be taken out on an outing to a place in the countryside where they will have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the new environment. During this outing I intend to observe childrenôs interaction with the environment and will gather data through field notes through different methods including photographs and video recording.

Any personal details will be confidential and all data collected will be anonymised. In order to secure this, all data, including audio, photos and video recordings will be destroyed two years after the end of the study.

I would appreciate if you grant your permission for me to observe and collect data from sessions and from the outings by signing the attached consent form and send it back to the school at your earliest convenience. Your child will be free to ask me to refrain from observing him/her or collecting data. However, in case that you do not give your consent I will refrain from observing your child and will omit any information that may involve your child from my field notes or collected data.

Should you have any queries, please contact me at: natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt and I will be very happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

Natalie Lombardi Calleja

Researcher: Natalie Lombardi Calleja

natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt

Contact No: +356 79266205

Supervisor: Prof. Adrian Mario Gellel

adrian.gellel@um.edu.mt

Consent Form for participation in the study

I, the undersigned, give my consent for the child under my care _____ (name of child in block letters) to participate in the research entitled: *Silence and Observation in early childhood education. The Pedagogical basis of a Symbol Literacy Approach.* For this study, the child will be part of two fieldwork activities which will be held outside school on different dates. Furthermore, these activities will go hand in hand with normal educational practise and will have no change in curriculum or assessment.

I understand that:

vii. The childôs real name/identity will not be used at any point in the study.
viii. All data, including audio, photos and video recordings will be destroyed two years after the end of the study.
ix. All information gathered during the study will be used for research purposes only.

Should I require any additional information, I may contact the researcher, being a co-teacher of the childôs classroom teacher, via email: natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt

I, _____(name), parent/guardian of

_____(childôs name), of class _____

- give my consent to Ms Lombardi to observe and collect fieldnotes during silence and observation sessions as well as during the outdoor activity.
- give my consent to Ms Lombardi to collect data through video footage and/or photographs.
- give consent to Ms Lombardi to use and alsyse the data for research purposes.
- give my consent to Ms Lombardi to make use and possibly publish in research publications (including the dissertation) drawings and/or quotations of my child.
- understand that at no point will the published data identify my child.
- understand that I can withdraw my consent at any given moment.
- understand that the childôs confidentaility will be assured.

Signature: _____

Researcher **University Supervisor**

_____ _____
Natalie Lombardi Calleja Prof Adrian M. Gellel

Date: _____

Ittra ta' informazzjoni lill-ġenituri/gwardjana (Grupp ta` kontroll)

GĦeŨeŨāenituri jew gwardjani,

BĦalissa ninsab gĦaddejja bi studju ta' Master fl-Edukazzjoni fil-qasam ta' 'Symbol Literacy' fi Ħdan l-Università taôMalta. Diversi ricerki juru li l-uŨu tas-silenzju prattikat f'metodi differenti huwa ta' benefiŨŨju gĦat-tfal f'aspetti varji ta' Ħajjithom. GĦal dan il-proāett taôriŨerka beĦsiebni nagĦmel studju bit-titlu: *Silence and Observation in early childhood education. The Pedagogical basis of a Symbol Literacy Approach*, taĦt is-superviŨjoni tal-Professur Adrian-Mario Gellel. B'dan il-proāett, jien ser neŨamina kif metodoloāiji differenti ta' silenzju u osservazzjoni jistgĦu jtejbu l-abbilta' sabiex jinterpretaw aĦjar ir-realta' ta' madwarhom.

Sabiex tiāi eŨegwita din ir-riŨerka, bil-permess u l-gĦajnuna tagĦkom ser norganizza Ũewāattivitajiet barra mill-iskola fi āranet differenti. Dawn l-attivitajiet ser jiāu eŨegwiti in konformita` mal-prattiŨ tal-edukazzjoni normali u mhux ser ikollhom ebda effett fuq ir- rutina ta' attivititajiet li jsiru fl-iskola ta' kuljum.

Waqt dawn l-attivitajiet, it-tfal ser noĦduhom fôambjent rurali fejn huma ser ikollhom l-opportunita` li jesploraw l-ambjent ta` madwarhom. Jien ser inkun qed nosserva u niābor informazzjoni permezz ta' ritratti u vidjows bl-gĦan li nkun nista nara kif it-tfal jagixxu fi spazji ta' ambjent rurali.

Kull informazzjoni miābura ser tibqa kunfidenzjali u anonima. Kull informazzjoni miābura waqt din ir-riŨerka, inkluŨawdjo, ritratti u vidjow ser tiāi distrutta fi Ũmien sentejn wara li r-ricerka tkun intemmet.

Naprezza jekk ittini l-kunsens tiegĦek sabiex nosserva u niābor informazzjoni mis-sessjonijiet kif ukoll l-attivitajiet li ser isiru barra mill-iskola billi tiffirma l-formola tal-kunsens mehmuŨa u tibgĦatha l-iskola mill-aktar fis possibbli. Waqt din ir-riŨerka it-tifel/ tifla jistgĦu jiddeŨedu li ma jkunux osservati jew parteŨpi iŨjed f'dan l-istudju. Madanakollu, fil-kaŨli inti ma tagĦtix il-kunsens tiegĦek mill-bidu, jien mhux ser inkun qed nosserva t-tifel/tifla tiegĦek u nĦalli informazzjoni dwar it-tifel/tifla barra mill-istudju.

Jekk gĦandek xi mistoqsijiet tista` tikkuntatjani bl-imejl fuq: natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt

Dejjem TiegĦek,

Natalie Lombardi Calleja

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Numru: +356 79266205

SuperviŨur: Prof. Adrian Mario Gellel
adrian.gellel@um.edu.mt

Kunsens għal riċerka mat-tfal

Jien, hawn taħt iffirmat, nagħti l-kunsens għat-tifel/tifla taħt il-protezzjoni tiegħi _____ (isem it-tifel/tifla, bl-ittri kapitali) biex jipparteċipa/tipparteċipa fir-riċerka bl-isem: *Silence and Observation in early childhood education. The Pedagogical basis of a Symbol Literacy Approach*. Għal dan l-istudju, it-tifel/tifla ser ikun/tkun parti minn ċerti attivitajiet li ser isiru barra mill-iskola fi ħranet differenti. Dawn l-attivitajiet ser jiġu eċiegwiti in konformita` mal-prattiċi tal-edukazzjoni normali u mhux ser ikollhom ebda effett fuq il-kurrikulum jew assessjar.

Jien nifhem illi:

x. L-isem jew l-identita` tat-tifel/tifla mhux ser ikunu wżati fl-ebda parti tal-istudju.
xi. Kull informazzjoni miġbura waqt din ir-riċerka, inkluż awdjo, ritratti u vidjow ser tiġi distrutta fi żmien sentejn wara li r-ricerka tkun intemmet.
xii. L-informazzjoni kollha miġbura waqt dan l-istudju ser tintuża biss għal skopijiet ta` riċerka.

Jekk niġi bżonn kwalunkwe informazzjoni oħra, nista` nikkuntatja r-riċerkatriċi, li hija ukoll co-għalliema tal-għalliema tal-klassi tat-tifel/tifla, permezz tal-imejl: natalie.lombardi-calleja.03@um.edu.mt

Jiena, _____(isem), ħenitur/gwardjan ta`

_____(isem tat-tifel/tifla), li jinsab fi klassi _____

- nagħti l-kunsens lil Ms Lombardi biex tosserva u tiġbor informazzjoni waqt is-sessjonijiet taħ silenzju u osservazzjoni, kif ukoll, waqt l-attivitajiet li ser iseħħu barra mill-iskola.
- nagħti l-kunsens lil Ms Lombardi biex tiġbor informazzjoni permezz taħ vidjows u ritratti.
- nagħti l-kunsens lil Ms Lombardi biex tuża u tanalizza l-informazzjoni miġbura għal skopijiet taħ riċerka
- nagħti l-kunsens lil Ms Lombardi biex tuża u possibilment tippublika fiċ-ċrki (inkluz dan l-istudju) tpinġijiet jew kwotazzjonijiet tat-tifel/tifla.
- nifhem li l-informazzjoni ippublikata mhix ser tidentifika lit-tifel/tifla
- nifhem li nista` nirtira l-parteċipazzjoni meta rrid
- nifhem li l-kunfidenzjalita` tat-tifel/tifla ser tkun imħarsa u garantita.

Firma: _____

Riċerkatriċi

_____

Natalie Lombardi Calleja

Data: _____

Superviżur ta` l-Universita`

_____

Prof Adrian M. Gellel

Appendix 6e

Verbal Information Guide for Children

Hello. My name is Miss Natalie. I go to school like you but in my school only adults attend. I would like you to help me in my homework.

Your teacher will do some activities that include silence. There will be times when I will come by to join you. We will also be going on three outings. During these activities I will be seeing how you are doing the activities, take some photos and I will also use the video recorder.

I have already spoken to your parents and persons who take care of you, but if you do not want me to take photos of you or see how you are doing the activity, it is okay, you can tell me. I will not be upset and not even your teacher or the people at your home. Also, you can still do all the activities and come to all the outings.

Did you understand me? Would you like to ask me something?

(*After the questions, give out the assent form to the children*)

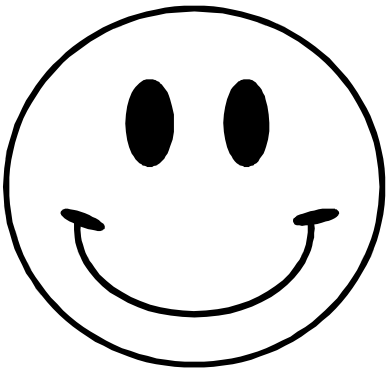
Is it okay for you to see you during the activities, take some photos and use the video recorder? Think a bit about it. If it is okay for you colour the smiley face (*point to the smiley face on the paper*) and if it is not okay for you colour the sad face (*point to the sad face on the paper*).

Thank you!

Assent Form

Name of Child: _____

Child's Voluntary Response to Participation:



Signature of Collaborative Participant: _____ **Date:** _____

Gwida Verbali Għat-Tfal

Ǩellow. Jien jisimni Miss Natalie. Jien immur l-iskola bǩalkom imma kbar biss jiāu fl-iskola tiegǩi. Nixtieqkom tgǩinuni bil-ðhomeworkô tiegǩi.

L-gǩalliema tagǩkom se tagǩmel xi logǩob fuq is-silenzju u xi kultant jien se niāi nagǩmilhom magǩkom. Se mmorru tliet ǩarāiet ukoll. Waqt dawk il-logǩob jien se nkun qed narakom, nieǩu xi ritratti u vidjow ukoll.

Jien diāa` kellimt lill-āenituri tagǩkom jew lin-nies li jieǩdu ǩsiebkom id-dar, imma jekk intom ma tridunix nieǩu ritratti tagǩkom jew noqgǩod narakom tilagǩbu l-logǩob, ma jimpurtax. Xorta se tkunu tistgǩu tagǩmlu l-logǩob u tiāu l-ǩarāiet. Jien mhux se nieǩu gǩalija u lanqas l-gǩalliema jew il-āenituri tagǩkom.

Fhimtuni? Tixtiequ tistaqsuni xi ǩaāa?

(*Wara l-mistoqsijiet, qassam il-formola lit-tfal*)

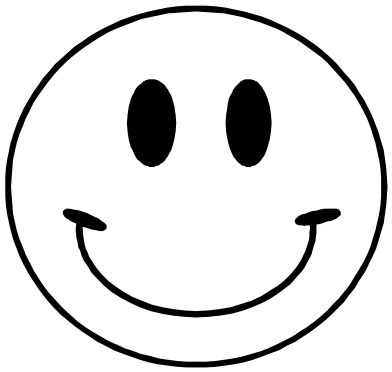
Huwa tajjeb gǩalikom li narakom waqt l-attivitajiet, nieǩu xi ritratti u vidjow? Aǩsbu ftit. Jekk IVA, pināi l-wiŰŰ li qed jidǩak (*uri l-wiċċ daħkani fuq il-karta*), jekk mhux iva gǩalik pināi l-wiŰŰimdejjaq (*uri l-wiċċ imdejjaq fuq il karta*).

Grazzi!

Formola ta` Qbil

Isem tat-tifel/tifla: _____

Risposta ta` parteċipazzjoni volontarja tat-tifel/tifla:



Firma tal-għalliema: _____ Data: _____

Appendix 6c

Verbal Information Guide for Children

Hello. My name is Miss Natalie. I go to school like you but in my school only adults attend. I would like you to help me in my homework.

We will be going on two outings. During these activities I will be seeing how you are doing the activities, take some photos and I will also use the video recorder.

When I tell other people about my study, I will not use your real name but I might show some photos which I will be taking during the activities.

I have already spoken to your parents and persons who take care of you, but if you do not want me to take photos of you or see how you are doing the activity, it is okay, you can tell me. I will not be upset and not even your teacher or the people at your home. Also, you can still do all the activities and come to all the outings.

Did you understand me? Would you like to ask me something?

(*After the questions, give out the assent form to the children*)

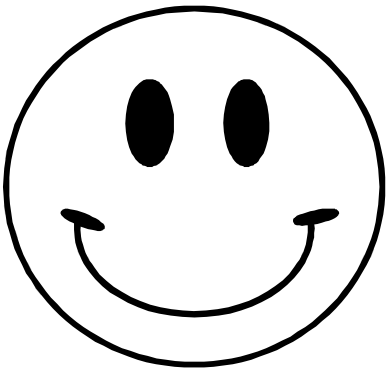
Is it okay for you to see you during the activities, take some photos and use the video recorder? Think a bit about it. If it is okay for you colour the smiley face (*point to the smiley face on the paper*) and if it is not okay for you colour the sad face (*point to the sad face on the paper*).

Thank you!

Assent Form

Name of Child: _____

Child's Voluntary Response to Participation:



Signature of Prospective Participant: _____ **Date:** _____

Gwida Verbali Għat-Tfal

Ħellow. Jien jisimni Miss Natalie. Jien immur l-iskola bħalkom imma kbar biss jiġu fl-iskola tiegħi. Nixtieqkom tgħinuni bil-ðhomeworkô tiegħi.

Se mmorru Ġewġa ħarġiet. Waqt il-logħob jien se nkun qed narakom, nieħu xi ritratti u vidjow ukoll.

Jien diġa` kellimt lill-ġenituri tagħkom jew lin-nies li jieħdu ħsiebkom id-dar, imma jekk intom ma tridunix nieħu ritratti tagħkom jew noqgħod narakom tilagħbu l-logħob, ma jimpurtax. Xorta se tkunu tistgħu tagħmlu l-logħob u tiġu l-ħarġiet. Jien mhux se nieħu għalija u lanqas l-għalliema jew il-ġenituri tagħkom.

Fhimtuni? Tixtiequ tistaqsuni xi ħaġa?

(*Wara l-mistoqsijiet, qassam il-formola lit-tfal*)

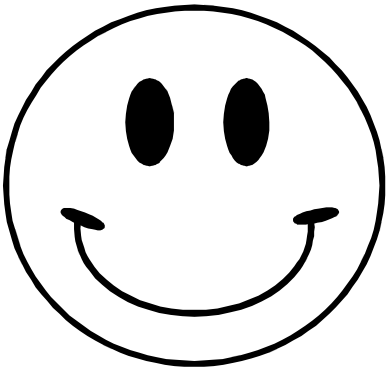
Huwa tajjeb għalikom li narakom waqt il-ħruġ, nieħu xi ritratti u vidjow? Aħsbu ftit. Jekk IVA, pinġi l-wiŰŰli qed jidħak (*uri l-wiċċ daħkani fuq il-karta*), jekk mhux iva għalik pinġi l-wiŰŰimdejjaq (*uri l-wiċċ imdejjaq fuq il karta*).

Grazzi!

Formola ta` Qbil

Isem tat-tifel/tifla: _____

Risposta ta` parteċipazzjoni volontarja tat-tifel/tifla:



Firma tal-għalliema: _____ Data: _____

Appendix 7

Activities Observation Sheet

Date: _____

Time Starting Session: _____ Time Ending Session: _____

Session Type:

Frequency of behaviour during Session or immediately after (30 min after)			
Observation		Silence	
Awe & Wonder		Co-operation	
Insight		Record	
Question		Record	
Other		Record	

Frequency of behaviour during Session			
Giggling		Refusing to co-operate	
Withdrawn Behaviour		Refusing to stay in place	
Other			

Field notes

Appendix 8

Fieldwork Observation Sheet

Date: _____ Group: _____ Fieldwork number: _____

Time Starting Fieldwork: _____ Time Ending Fieldwork: _____

Frequency of behaviour during fieldwork		
Observation		
Silence		
Awe & Surprise		
Kindness & Care		
Compassion & Empathy		
Co-operation		
Gratitude		
Other		

Incidences to take note of whilst observation
• Do the children already have a meaning/purpose of the objects around them? If not, what are they doing to learn about them? • Which senses are mostly used? What is the frequency of them being used? • What is the frequency of the language used? • Any emotional behaviours shown? • Any children opted to find a space on their own and just stay there in silence? • Any pair/group collaboration? • Any children who did not interact with the environment but prefer to stay with the teachers; are misbehaving or are running widely without a purpose? • Otheré

Appendix 9

Journal Entry Template for Collaborative Teacher

Date:

Date:

Date:

Appendix 10

List of Silent and Observational Activities

(taken from Kaiser Greenland, 2016, Reddy, 2014 and Snel, 2013)

Sitting Still Like a Frog

Begin by asking the children to sit down calmly, either in a circle or freely, and make a calming chime so that they will know it is time to ótuck their sounds awayô and listen. Tell the children that you are going to play a game called óSitting Like a Frogô. Explain to them that a frog is capable of enormous leaps, but it can also sit very still. Although it is aware of everything that happens around it, the frog tends not to react right away. The frog sits very still while it breathes. Its frog tummy raises a bit and falls again. Explain to the children that anything a frog can do, they can do it too. All they need is to focus on what they are seeing, keeping attention and concentration. You can opt to show a small video clip of a very still frog before capturing a fly.

Fading Tone + Tick Tock

1. Sit with back straight and body relaxed and closed eyes. When I ring the bell, listen to the sound of the tone as it fades away. Raise your hand when you canôt hear the tone anymore ï when the sound stops.
2. Talk about a grandfather clock and the sound it makes. Practice swaying side to side like the pendulum. Put your hand on the floor next to you and lean your body to the right. Now push your body to the left and catch your weight with your left hand on the floor. Say Tick-Tock whilst doing this movement and when you find your centre say STOP.

What did I hear + Book

1. Sit with back straight and body relaxed and closed eyes. Iôm going to make some sounds with different instruments. Just relax and listen. Guess whatôs making the sound.
2. Read and discuss the book óSilenceô by Lemniscates. Include sound effects.

Duck, Rabbit

Look at the drawing of duck, rabbit (illusion). Ask the children: Is it a duck or a rabbit? Wait for the answers. Ask the children to look again and see if they change their mind

Imaginary Hugs

Discuss: What does it feel like to hug someone you care about? If someone youôd like to hug isnôt in the same room with you, can you give them an imaginary hug anyway?

Sit with back straight and body relaxed. Start by sending a friendly wish to yourself. Give yourself a big hug and say óI hope I have a great day with lots of fun with my friendsô. Next, make your arms into a circle in front of your chest and think of someone youôd like to hug. Give them an imaginary hug and say óI hope you are happy and having a great dayô.

Your own bubble + Hello

1. We are going to make an imaginary bubble around our body ï create your own bubble. Can you describe it? Pretend to test the edges with the palms of your hands. How close can you get your palms to my palms or your shoulders to my shoulders without touching? Remember to check your bubble every so often.
2. When we look into someoneôs eyes we might feel different every time we do it. Iôm going to say óhelloô to you and tell you what colour your eyes are, and then youôll have a turn. ñHello Jack. Your eyes look brown.ò Now you try. How did it feel?

Zip Up

Letôs pretend we have a zipper running up and down our bodies, from our belly buttons to our chins, that helps us sit or stand straight and tall. Put one hand in front of your belly button and the other hand at your lower back. Ok, letôs zip ourselves up: ZIIIPPP

Rock a Bye + Mira's Game

1. Lie on your back with legs flat on floor and arms by your sides. I am going to place a stuffed animal on your belly. Now notice what it feels like to breathe in and out, moving the animal up and down with your breathing.
2. Sit down with back straight and body relaxed. Iôll place a stone on the floor in front of you to look at. When I ring the bell pick up the stone, close your eyes and feel the stone in your hands for a few breaths. When I ring the bell again open your eyes and look at the stone. Then when I ring the bell for the third time place the stone back on the floor and look at it.

Thank the Farmer

Letôs pick up a raisin. But before we eat it, weôll think about how it feels. Hold in your hand and feel its texture. Now think about how it got from the grapevine into our hands. Think of the sun and the rain that fed the vinesé THANK YOU NATURE! Think of the farmers who took care of the vinesé THANK YOU FARMERS! Think of the workers who harvested the grapes and put them out to dryé THANK YOU WORKERS! Think of the truck drivers who drove the raising to the storeé THANK YOU TRUCK DRIVERS! Think of the person who bought the raising and brought them to youé THANK YOU TEACHER! Youôre Welcome ☺ Now letôs eat the raisin. Take a moment without chewing and notice what it feels like in your mouth.

Food Activity Break

This is done during lunch time before the children starts to eat their lunch. Pick up the food and notice what it looks like, smells like and feels like. Pop the food in your mouth for a moment but donôt chew it. Feel the food. Now chew it in slow motion. See what it feels like.

Pass the Pulses + Sending Wishes

1. When I say GO, gently squeeze the hand of the person holding your left hand. When you feel your right hand get a squeeze, thatôs your cue to gently squeeze your left hand and pass the pulse to the next person.
2. What are friendly wishes? Weôre going to imagine that weôre sending our friendly wishes to the world in a big, floating ball. Letôs start by pretending to hold the ball together. Put your hands out and help me hold the ball, like this. What does it look like? What colour is it? Close your eyes and picture it. Now say your friendly wishes and put them in the ball. Letôs count to three and then throw the ball up into the sky together.

Pinwheel/Shake it Up

1. Sit with back straight and body relax. Pick up your pinwheel. Weôll blow on them together using long, deep breaths and notice how we feel. Now letôs blow on our pinwheels using short, quick breaths and notice how we feel. Then, letôs blow on our pinwheels breathing normally and notice how we feel.
2. Letôs pretend to put magic glue on the bottoms of our feet and glue them to the floor. Can you wiggle your knees and keep the bottoms of your feet flat on the floor? Letôs move our bodies to the sound of the drum, keeping our feet to the floor. Make big movements when you hear loud drumming and small movements when you hear quiet drumming

Stop, Feel my Breath + Jar

1. What do you feel like when youôre excited/sad/tired? It can be hard to control our voices and bodies when weôre excited. Weôre going to sing a song called ôI stop and feel my breathingô which will help you if you use it when you need to control your emotions.
2. Show a jar filled with water and glitters to the children. Shake it and tell your child that sometimes our minds are full of thoughts, swirling around like the glitter in the jar. Sometimes we experience angry thoughts. Sometimes sad thoughts. Tell them that itôs okay to have strong feelings but that we can calm those thoughts and our bodies as well. One way to do this is to let your thoughts settle like the glitter in the jar. When our minds are calm itôs easier to work out problems and to talk about whatever it is that is causing us to be upset. Shake the jar up until the glitter is spinning wildly. Then set it on a table or the floor and calmly watch it with your child until the glitter, and your minds, are all settled down.

Mystery Box

Letôs guess whatôs inside the mystery box. What does it feel like to not know whatôs in the box? Shake the box and ask the children to guess whatôs inside. Open it and see together.

Not a Box

Go through the book ôNot a Boxô by Antoinette Portis, to understand what the characters are thinking and how they are feeling. Ask the children questions like: ôWho do you think is asking the question?ô; ôWhat is it?ô; ôHow do you think the bunny feels?ô; ôWhat is the bunny doing?ô

Kindness Bracelet

Put on an elastic bracelet on the right wrist. This is a reminder to be nice to yourself and others. Whenever you think you are being unkind or unpleasant towards others, touch your bracelet and re think your actions.

Stadium Wave

Can someone describe a wave? Do you know what a stadium wave is? Crouch down, with your knees bent and your hands touching the floor, like this. When I say GO, start the wave. Letôs speed it up; Letôs slow it down too.