DOCTORAL THESIS

Art history in an infant primary school
an intervention in the curriculum

Pitfield Worsley, Laura

Award date:
2011

Awarding institution:
University of Roehampton

CHAPTER FOUR: PREPARATION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I describe the actions, reflection and evaluation undertaken in Cycle One. Actions centred mainly on researcher and teacher preparation for implementing the ISEE strategy in lessons. The chapter is divided into three sections and I begin by detailing the aims, participants, roles and timeframe of actions in the cycle. In the first section, I report on the results of a staff questionnaire and pupil interviews I conducted and analysed at the beginning of the action research.

In the second section, I discuss group preparation and an In-Service (InSET) training morning during which I introduced teachers and TAs to the action research, art history subject knowledge and the ISEE strategy in a demonstration lesson I taught. Two practice sessions to embed the ISEE are detailed. In the last section, I begin by reporting action team reflection and evaluation of the cycle. In the final part, I present my own reflection and evaluation of actions, the ISEE and artworks and report the team's recommendations for the next cycle.

4.1 CYCLE ONE

  4.1.1 Aims

The aim of the cycle was to plan and prepare for the upcoming teaching in Cycle Two. Evaluation of this cycle focused on the preparedness of participants for actions in subsequent cycles.

  4.1.2 Participants

The participants in Cycle One included the headteacher, four classroom teachers, three TAs, 84 pupils and me. As discussed in Chapter Three, the teachers, headteacher and I were members of the action team and the TAs participated in a supporting role as members of an observation team.

  4.1.3 Details of actions

In this cycle, actions involved planning and preparing for the action research through CPD training and practicing the ISEE, attending reflection and evaluation meetings and reviewing and agreeing data collection instruments. The TAs completed the staff

questionnaire and attended one InSET training morning with the action team. Throughout the action research, all written and reading material, lesson plans, correspondence and emails were sent out to members of both the action and observation teams. I also gave them all a copy of Graham Pooke's (2002) Open University text called <u>Introduction to Art History</u>. In this cycle, pupils, as the target population for the strategy, participated in one-to-one interviews with me.

The teachers' roles were to prepare individually for the upcoming teaching and to participate in the questionnaire, staff training and ISEE practice sessions. Because they expected specialist guidance and training as part of their preparation in Cycle One, my role involved acting as art history subject trainer as well as leading practice training sessions. As co-ordinator, I led action team reflection and evaluation meetings, designed and organised data collection instruments and resources. I administered and conducted the questionnaires and interviews. I gathered, transcribed and coded data to identify agenda items for discussion at team meetings. Following this, I filed and stored data. Finally, in my role of researcher I carried out a reflection and evaluation on actions, the ISEE and artworks. Figure 4.1 shows the two strands of actions undertaken concurrently.

Fig. 4.1 Cycle One: Two strands of action research
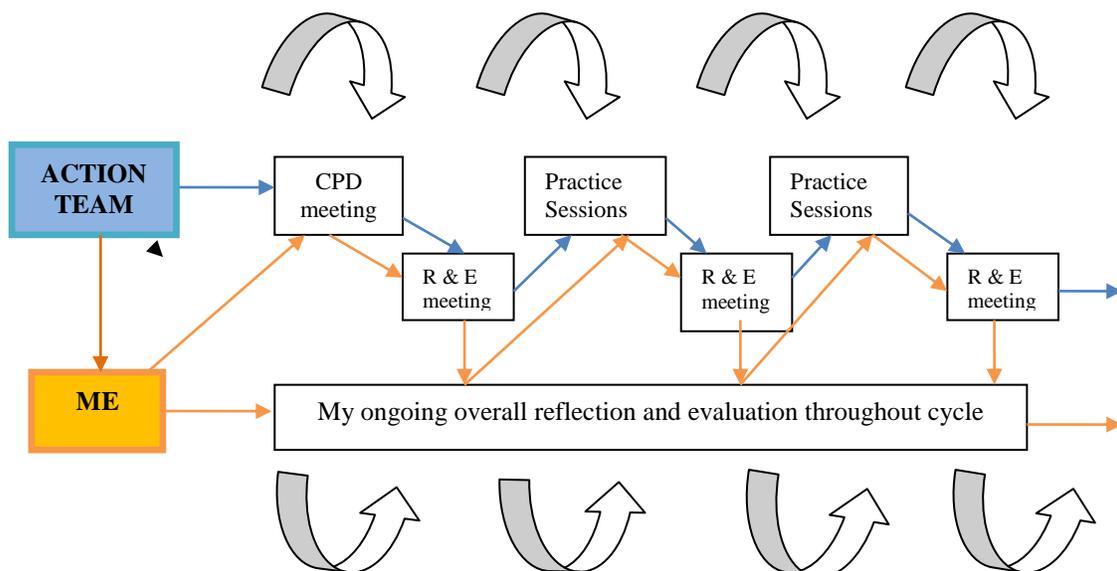
4.1.4 Timetable of actions

The headteacher timetabled actions for the cycle and distributed them to the teachers, TAs and me by email in September, 2006. Table 13 shows the schedule of actions for this cycle.

Table 13: Timetable for Cycle One actions

DATES	ACTIONTEAM	OBSERVATION TEAM	PUPILS	RESEARCHER
05/09/06-16/09/06	Completed staff questionnaire	Completed staff questionnaire	_	Conducted staff questionnaires Administered/analysed/summarised findings
30/10/06	InSET training morning	InSET training morning	_	Led InSET training morning
Mid September to November 2006	_	_	Pupils interviews	Conducted pupil interviews Analysed/summarised findings
14/11/06	Practice session (1) for ISEE Team meeting	_	_	Led practice session (1) and co-ordinated and participated in team meeting
28/11/06 11/12/06	Practice session (2) for ISEE Team meeting	_	_	Led practice session (2) Co-ordinated and participated in reflection and evaluation of cycle
Preparation September to December, 2006	Individual preparation, planning and reading	_	_	Organised paintings, finalised data collection instruments and research lesson plans, collected and sourced resources and collected, coded, analysed and stored data Set agenda for team meetings

4.2 RESEARCHER PREPARATION

4.2.1 Introduction

Aside from helping teachers prepare for their teaching roles, it was necessary for me to prepare for my role as researcher and co-ordinator. First, I administered two diagnostic tools (staff questionnaire and pupil interviews) at the start of the action research. Next, I wrote the research lessons and completed the selection of artworks reported in Chapter Three and discussed them with the teachers. Finally, in preparation for leading the reflection and evaluation meetings, I re-examined action research literature about instigating and carrying out reflection (Costello, 2003; McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 2003; Macintyre, 2000; Stringer, 2007, Whitehead and McNiff, 2006) to develop a sense of how to conduct team meetings and identify points for discussion. The last task was to source and supply reproductions of paintings to accompany the questionnaires, interview schedules, InSET training and practice sessions and research lessons.

4.3 DIAGNOSTIC

      4.3.1 Staff questionnaire (see Appendix 6)

In this part, I present a summary of findings from the staff questionnaire discussed in Chapter Three. It was given to the headteacher, teachers and TAs to complete (5th September, 2006) and return to me. The purpose was to determine their attitudes and experience of art and existing practice working with artworks at the start of the art project. Findings were used to inform the design of the nine research lessons, training needs and provide an awareness of participants' expectations. I collated and analysed questionnaire responses and summarised them for staff at an InSET training morning (30th October, 2006).

      4.3.2 Findings

The teachers were all generalist classroom teachers and only one had taken a studio art course at college. Nearly all shared some personal and professional concern about teaching 'about artists and artworks' (AT2, National Curriculum, 1999) and this related mainly to their perceived lack of art history subject knowledge. Two teachers reported a lack of confidence talking about art in a reflexive way. Using the main aims of the questionnaire, I analysed responses by grouping them in the following four areas:

      4.3.2.1 Past experience of art

Most of the staff viewed visiting art galleries and museums as an interesting leisure activity and did so on holiday. The majority appreciated art as a positive personal experience and enjoyed looking at it. One TA, however, did not 'ever' go to look at artworks. Nearly all of them visited galleries and museums with their own children to share this personal experience. Seven of the eight staff members made annual visits to national art institutions in London such as Tate Britain and Tate Modern, The National Gallery, Hayward Gallery and Royal Academy and three regularly took the opportunity to visit art galleries in their local vicinity. Four of the five teachers mentioned, without prompting that they visited public art institutions when travelling abroad on holiday. From their responses and informal conversations when they handed in questionnaires, I understood some of them considered interpreting artworks could develop pupils' visual literacy skills and /or improve their art making. However, one voiced uncertainty about what pupils would gain from such experiences.

4.3.2.2 Previous strategies for engaging pupils with art

All the teachers said they talked about artworks in class. Their current pedagogical strategies included asking pupils what they thought about paintings; using artworks to 'look at and copy' and two said they questioned pupils about the 'content' of artworks which I understood to mean subject matter. Five of them considered it important to give pupils information about the artist and the painting such as the artist's name and title. One teacher wanted them to feel 'comfortable' with artworks and understand what an artist was communicating. One wanted them to 'make sense of what they observed' and another said she gave them the 'story behind it'. Overall, the teachers' strategies reflected recognisable art practices documented in the literature such as **imitation**: copying or imitating exemplars; **art appreciation**: observing, looking, appreciating; **art criticism**/critical analysis: questioning, comparing and contrasting; **aesthetics/expressivism**: feeling comfortable, understanding artist; and **art history**: information, making sense by hearing the story behind it or finding out about the artist.

4.3.2.3 Motivation to participate

In Task One, teachers and TAs were asked to select a painting that interested them from a pre-selected group of 12 (see Table 12) and to comment on why they had chosen it. Five of the eight respondents indicated they selected a painting based on personal preference such as they 'liked' it. Three of them said they chose a painting because of the content and then noted and described the visual subject matter.

Task Two asked them to look at Jean-Baptist Chardin's ***The House of Cards*** and comment on what they noticed or thought about it. Six of the eight teachers commented on formal qualities like colour, shape, texture, patterns and techniques of the paintings. Five of them noted these exclusively. Two offered spontaneous value judgements such as 'I just don't like it' and 'this is an important one because it's well known' when they wrote about it. I concluded that most teachers and TAs relied on subject matter observed in the paintings and none of them wrote about meaning or offered an interpretation.

4.3.2.4 Confidence in talking about art

When asked how they felt about talking to pupils about art at the present time all but one teacher said they were confident or fairly confident. Three said they felt confident working with art they had seen before. Two were confident because they were 'interested' in art and

one because of previous experience of National Gallery school visits. Another wrote down she had attended two courses, in RE (symbolism) and art and literacy. Despite this, all of them gave the following reasons why they might lack confidence:

- No professional training or knowledge about art and artists
- Not artistically experienced
- Dislike of abstract or modern art
- Not sure what to talk about or purpose of some artworks

Two TAs reported little or no confidence to talk about artworks.

4.3.2.5 Identified resources required for teaching

The teachers were asked to list the resources they would need to teach in Cycle Two. The list included:

1. High quality, large scale and postcard size reproductions for use with pupils;
2. Teacher briefing notes (on artist and artwork)
3. ICT resources: video, PowerPoint, interactive whiteboard and internet
4. Lesson plans, learning outcomes/objectives, evaluation criteria
5. Art history training material
6. Modelling for teachers and practice work

4.3.3 Pupil interviews

In this part, I describe how the pupil interviews were carried out and report on a summary of findings. In total, 84 pupils took part in audio tape recorded interviews from October to November, 2006. The timing of the interviews was determined by the need to allow new entrants time to settle into a routine and become familiar with their surroundings, teachers and peer groups.

I carried out interviews during regular lessons and they took place either in a quiet area of the classroom or in the library. Pupils came to sit with me, one after another, on a rotating basis. Many of them already knew me from my role as a school governor. The interviews lasted on average eight minutes with each pupil. They answered eight structured questions and took part in two tasks which I read out to them before scribing their responses (see Appendix 11).

As part of the ethical requirements outlined and agreed with Roehampton University Ethics Committee (2005), the interviews began by me introducing myself and the art project (see Appendix 12) and seeking their oral permission to participate. Four pupils (two boys and a girl in Reception and one boy in Year One) said they did not want to participate in the

interview so I thanked them and asked them to return to class. In a few other cases, some pupils appeared reluctant to participate and answered with single word answers or not at all so I concluded the interview. I had anticipated this might happen even though I tried to make the interview as comfortable and informal as possible by chatting for example about unrelated things happening in the school or on the day. As a result, I engaged pupils in dialogue that at times was unrelated to the set questions, for example when we discussed special morning assemblies such as the Diwali or Harvest Festival in October and November and their excitement about snow days or opening Advent calendars in December, 2006. These were the ice breakers decided on following the pilot test and meant to put pupils at ease.

The interviews began with the youngest pupils aged between four and five years in Reception Class.[1] During the initial stage of interviewing, while introducing the art project to one Reception Class boy I noticed he became increasingly agitated. When I asked why, he explained 'I just don't know what 'art' is?' From this point onwards I changed the interview schedule to begin with the question *What do you think art is*?

I gave pupils two tasks. In one task, they were asked to look at a single painting by Carel Weight entitled *Allegro Strepitoso* (see Fig. 4.2) and tell me about it.
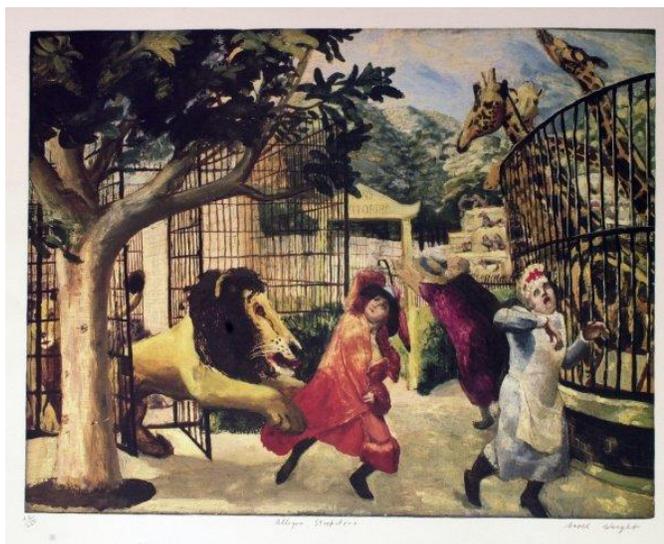
Fig. 4.2: Carel Weight, *Allegro Strepitoso,* 1932, oil on canvas, Tate Modern, London

---

[1] The majority of Reception pupils on 1st December, 2006 were four years of age (93%) while two pupils (7%) were five years old.

The vast majority of pupils seemed very keen to talk about it, although some more than others and this did not appear to be age-related. The aim of the task was for me to assess what interested pupils about the painting and, more particularly, what they said about it. My only intervention was to use the prompt 'anything else?' if necessary. Given the subject matter, my expectation was that pupils would talk about a lion escaping from a cage and chasing people in a zoo while giraffes looked on from their cage.

4.3.4 Findings

I collated and analysed pupils' responses and summarised findings which I reported to teachers at the final evaluation meeting at the end of Cycle One. The pupil profile showed that more than half (59%) of the pupils in the school were five years of age or younger and the rest were six years (38%) and seven years (3%). The ratio of boys to girls in Reception and Year Two (59:41) was higher than in Year One (50:50).

When they were asked to explain what *art* is, almost half the Reception pupils aged four and five years said they were not sure. By comparison, more than three-quarters of Year One and Two pupils could explain in some way what they thought the term meant. Pupils responses showed some of them understood *art* as referring to different materials and processes such as 'painting, drawing, colouring, collages and modelling' while others thought it was about doing something 'well', 'carefully' or 'cleverly'. Several said art was 'something you put in a frame'. Others had preconceived ideas about *who* were artists, for example, some said adults were, but not children. From this I concluded that not all the pupils shared the same understanding of what constitutes art and artists or were able to verbalise it.

I summarised pupil interview responses under three headings i) experience with, motivation and preferences in art; ii) disposition to talk about paintings and iii) strategies used to explain paintings and they are discussed below.

4.3.4.1 Experience, motivation and preference in art

Task One asked pupils to select a painting from the pre-selected group of 12 that interested them. Table 14 shows their selections by class.

Table 14: Pupils' selection of artwork from Task One in interviews

Class Total #	Appel Kind	Van Gogh Cypress	Hogarth Graham Children	Giordano Perseus	Egyptian Fresco	Nicholson Geometric Blocks	Inuit Seal	Hokusai Great Wave	Monet Houses of Parliament	Hunt English Coasts	Ofili No Wom No Cry	Picasso Child and Bird
R (29)	3		1	3		1	1	7	4	3	2	4
Y1 (27)	1		3	3		2		6	2	8		1
Y2 (28)	4	1	1	4	5	2	1	2	4	1	1	1
Total 84	**8**	**1**	**5**	**10**	**5**	**5**	**2**	**15**	**10**	**12**	**3**	**6**

In Reception Class, *The Great Wave* by Hokusai was chosen as most interesting, followed by Monet's *Houses of Parliament* and Picasso's *Child and Dove*. In Year One, Hunt's *Our English Coasts: Strayed Sheep* and Hokusai's *The Great Wave* were chosen more often while Year Two pupils chose the broadest range of paintings with each one being chosen by at least one pupil. The four paintings chosen most frequently were the *Egyptian wall fresco*; *Kind* by Arpel; *Perseus fighting Phineas and his Companions* by Giordano and *Houses of Parliament* by Monet. Overall, *The Great Wave* was the most popular choice.

Analysis of responses to the question about why they made a choice showed that three quarters of pupils based it on subject matter. Nearly half of them (mainly Reception and Year One pupils) based it on favouritism, for example 'I love sheep' (referring to Hunt's *Our English Coasts* and this supports Parsons' (1987) first stage of preference in art. Only three pupils mentioned formal qualities. Older pupils, mainly in Year Two, chose a wider variety of styles, periods and subjects ranging from Egyptian 4th c. BC fresco to Nicholson's *Geometric Blocks* (1940s) and Appel's CoBrA abstract painting, *Kind* (1987). Perhaps this reflected greater opportunities for this age-group to become acculturated into looking at certain kinds of images.

When asked whether they visited places to look at art, nearly half (39) of the 84 pupils remembered and could tell me where they went, which lent credibility to their positive replies. In response to the question of whether they liked or didn't like looking at art, nearly three quarters of them reported they 'really enjoyed it'. From their positive responses I concluded there was a supportive environment for the art project.

4.3.4.2 Disposition to talk about paintings

Pupils were rarely shy or disinclined to talk about the painting although some gave limited responses like 'there's two ladies and a lion' (Year One girl, #66) when talking about *Allegro Strepitoso* (Fig.4.2). Overall, the majority answered more fulsomely and without prompting. Nearly all those I did prompt were able to talk about the painting in further detail. From pupils' responses in Task Two, I judged the vast majority enjoyed talking about the painting, *Allegro Strepitoso* (Fig.4.2) and could offer an interpretation of it.

4.3.4.3 Strategies used to explain art

Pupils in each year group used similar strategies to talk about the artwork, for example acting out, storytelling and creating make believe or imaginary scenarios. Nearly half (36/84) of all pupils acted out or made dramatic gestures to accompany what they said about the painting, for example a Year Two boy said:

> I think this picture is quite good but that woman looks a bit scared…well, a lion is like grabbing a lady and the lady is doing that (frantic arm gestures) and trying to hit the lion with an umbrella and she's got a hat on, um... and the one behind her looks like she's going like that (simulates running with flailing arms) so she doesn't get held by the lion. (Year Two boy # 69)

Slightly less than a third (29/84) created storylines to explain the painting and most pupils who did this were in Years One and Two. Their stories varied from rambling streams of consciousness to complex narrative storylines in the third person, as shown in the example of a Year Two boy:

> In Spain, there was a little girl. She was touching the wires and accidentally knocked the gate and the lion came out and she was with her friends and saw the lion. They were thinking: What's going on over there? (Year Two, #44)

As mentioned, three of 84 pupils commented on formal qualities of the painting. Of these pupils who did comment, the following is an example:

> I like all the different colours in it and I like the mane because it goes all curly and I like that too (points to pattern on the tree trunk) and the colours – and I like the colour of shading in it, because it goes all brownish, greenish and bluish in the trees and the way they've done the giraffe's neck because it goes round and the nose is really good and I like the way it gets smaller and smaller to the tip (nose). And I like the way they've put the red eyes because he's actually staring at them. Well, I like the lady going like that (gestures) and I love that purplish colour… (Year One girl #70)

119

A quarter of pupils made up stories using imaginary events and subject matter to describe and explain them. One boy did not mention the lion featured prominently in the picture until the very end. Initially, he explained the painting by telling me:

> We're looking at a painting which is in the zoo. It tells you what's going on and it tells you that it is near the end of the valley and the road is where he didn't paint it… and the forest is near the end of the valley that shows you there's no road. But it is there (points to the background distance in the painting). (Year Two boy #28)

4.4 PARTICIPANTS' PREPARATION

4.4.1 CPD training and ISEE practice sessions

4.4.1.1 Description

In this section, I outline provisions made for continuous professional development training and two ISEE practice sessions carried out to prepare teachers and TAs. The following is a description of the InSET morning, demonstration lesson and practice sessions (#1 and #2).

The InSET training morning was carried out on 30th October, 2006. I led the meeting and the agenda included discussion of the methodology of action research, ethical guidelines, planning for the research, an overview of art history and a demonstration lesson to introduce and explain the ISEE strategy. Having carried out two earlier action research projects over the past eight years[2], there was a general agreement that the teachers and headteacher were confident about using this methodology.

The InSET morning began with a review and discussion about methodology and participants' expectations for the art project (see Appendix 25). One teacher, responsible for leading a Local Authority action research in 'problem solving' with a cluster of other schools in the locality, described her experiences and reported three issues that had arisen, i) confusion over leadership; ii) problems over a shared 'common language' and iii) struggles to find ways of 'assessing what was happening in each of the schools' (Teacher D, InSET 30/10/06). During the morning, discussion focused on topics such as sharing the workload in research lessons and observing teaching. I raised the issue of TAs observing and commenting on lessons but the teachers expressed a collective view that having the

---

[2] Dad's Reading Project (1998); (1999); (2000) and Leaders of Learning (FourS) Small Schools Cluster COBWEBS, (2005).

TAs' observational comments would strengthen feedback and evaluation. Proposed observation record forms were handed out and discussed. We agreed they would relate to observations of pupil behaviour, resources, classroom settings and atmosphere and not to teaching practice (see Appendix 1). Next, a code of conduct for the action research was agreed, in keeping with my Ethics proposal and Roehampton University Ethical Guidelines (see Appendix 2).

I presented a short PowerPoint presentation (see Appendix 26) giving an overview of art history in the twenty-first century and provided A4 colour copies of four paintings for discussion (see Appendix 23). I touched on some theoretical perspectives such as social theory and explained about the four disciplines of art history, criticism, aesthetics and studio production. One teacher asked if they should 'know' the book I gave them in the summer (InSET tape: 26.28). Teachers and TAs mostly listened while I spoke but several contributed ideas about art history saying it was about isms and styles. We talked about changing attitudes towards the question **What is art?** and new art forms emerging in recent years. This led one teacher to express her view that 'abstract art is impenetrable' (InSET tape: 37.31) and another to admit she 'didn't understand modern art' (InSET tape: 38.12).

Given the research focus on developing pupils' informed interpretations of paintings, I explained Panofsky's (1955) theory of iconography with its emphasis on content and his claim that meaning can be interpreted from an analysis of subject matter and symbol association. We discussed other approaches to interpreting art. One teacher, who was worried her interpretations would be wrong, was reassured by another who said, 'Who says there's a right or wrong answer' (InSET tape: 54.26). This became the theme for the morning and opened up a debate about subjectivity in meaning and ended with mutual agreement that in this research everyone's interpretations of art would be considered valid (Barrett (2002) and valuable.

I talked about my three underlying assumptions of the research that i) art is a form of communication; ii) finding out information about an artist or artwork helps us to understand about ourselves and others and the period of creation; and iii) there is a plurality of meanings for a single artwork. This prompted a discussion about how teachers would deliver information about artists and artworks and what skills were necessary for pupils to be able to interpret art. The team agreed that learning to look carefully at and pose

questions about paintings were two important criteria. I asked for the teachers' assistance in finding ways to disseminate art information. Then I presented my conceptual framework to them and several teachers concluded it would be interesting to see what happened in the classroom. They agreed to adopt a range of roles in the teaching, from acting as inquisitors posing questions, guides for the ISEE, informers of art information to teachers researchers in monitoring and evaluating the research.

There was a general understanding that collaborative learning was important in this school and two teachers asked how lessons would be organised, for example in pairs or whole class discussion. The Year One and Two teachers said pupils already worked collaboratively in the classroom with 'learning partners' and wanted to continue with paired learning in the research lessons. One teacher expressed a view that it was also important for pupils to work independently when they constructed interpretations. Aside from peer interaction and support, I talked with them about Vygotsky's (1978) notion of scaffolding and how they might guide pupils in interpreting a painting. The team recognised there were cognitive learning outcomes for these lessons and talked about higher order thinking skills. Following these discussions, I demonstrated a lesson that showed how the ISEE could be applied.

4.4.2 Demonstration lesson

I used the ISEE questions to guide the teachers and TAs in interpreting a single painting by John Everett Millais entitled *The Carpenter's Shop* or *Christ in the House of his Parents* (Fig.4.3). I chose this painting (Fig.4.3) because I thought it would provide an opportunity for interpreting subject matter in two ways, secular and non secular, for example as the Christ child or a child injured in a carpenter's workshop.

Fig. 4.3 J.E. Millais, *The Carpenter's Shop, Christ in the House of his Parents*, 1849/50, Tate Britain, London

4.4.2.1 Description

I gave out the lesson plan with aims and learning objectives (see Appendix 27) and explained each step of the ISEE. I asked everyone to participate as if they were the pupils in a research lesson, answering the ISEE questions I posed and taking part in discussion. I wrote the four key ISEE questions on the whiteboard to remind them and explained they could add sub questions to dig deeper into the detail of the painting. I reinforced the idea of repeating the question *Why do you think that?* or *How do you know that?* The four key questions were:

1. *What do you see?*
2. *Why are these things/people/places included in this painting?*
3. *How do you feel about this painting?*
4. (After giving information about the artist and artwork) *With everything you've heard and discussed about this painting – What is it all about?*

At first, when I posed questions, some teachers or TAs gave limited responses, kept their heads down and avoided eye contact. Eventually two teachers, the headteacher and one TA became active in the discussion (Journal, 30/10/06). Two of the remaining three teachers answered questions when asked directly but one teacher contributed only minimal responses. In Step Two I asked sub-questions like *What is the child doing?*, *Why do these people look concerned?, How are they related to one another?* and *Why is the setting in a workshop?* to encourage them to think about and analyse subject matter in the painting and to think about the actions, expressions, gestures and setting.

Two teachers raised concerns about the sequencing of the three steps, if they would be able to remember them and whether they should keep them separate from each other. For example, one teacher questioned, 'Do I stop pupils from making associations in Step One and say – no wait - that's in Step Two?' (InSET tape: 1:54). This led to a discussion about using the steps as a framework, moving from one question to another at the pace of class discussion. They asked if, when a pupil posed a direct question about the painting or artist, they should wait to answer it until Step Three. The team agreed that the teachers should answer questions when they were asked. I asked them to keep the discussion fluid and to be flexible with the ISEE as a curriculum model.

Next, we practised the ISEE using two further paintings. We examined George Fredric Watts' painting, **The Minotaur** (Fig.4.4) and compared it with a Mughal miniature of **Elephant Fed by his Keeper** (Fig. 4.5). Both paintings show a single large animal dominating the picture plane and have potential for discussion of two different cultures. One depicts a portrait of the half man, half bull *minotaur* of Greek legend and the other, a sacred Hindu elephant. I chose these two paintings for the similarities and differences engendered by the subject matter. I asked teachers and TAs to consider open-ended questions to pose for pupils to encourage curiosity and help them to think about the paintings. Although time was running out, some teachers shouted out: 'there's still time' and asked if we could run overtime to finish the exercise.

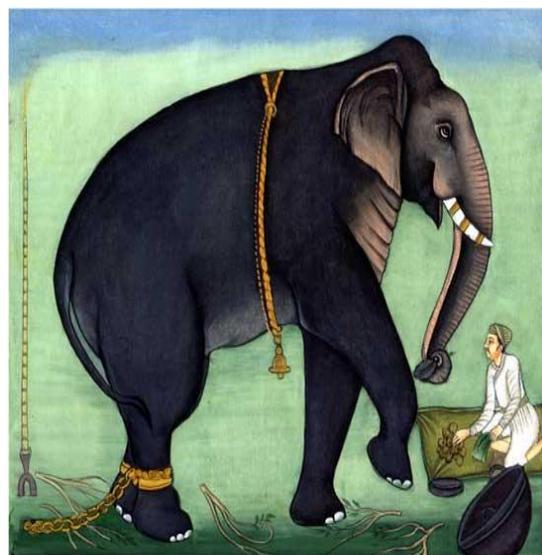Fig.4.4: G.F. Watts, **The Minotaur**, 1849, Tate Britain, London

Fig.4.5: Unknown artist, **Elephant Fed by his Keeper**, 16th c. Mughal miniature, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

I ended the InSET morning by giving teachers homework for discussion in the next practice session. Group chatter spilled into lunchtime and an informal conversation carried on about other art-related experiences and individual preferences in art.

4.4.3   ISEE practice sessions (#1 and #2)
4.4.3.1 Description

Two further practice sessions with the teachers and headteacher provided them with further opportunities to practise the ISEE. The first session (14 November, 2006) involved a discussion about the homework assignment to interpret a painting by John Constable,entitled *The Cornfield* (see Fig. 4.6) using the ISEE strategy. I chose this painting for its familiar content (a scene of English landscape painting) and the possibility teachers might have seen the original in the recent exhibition of Constable's works at Tate Britain between June and August, 2006 or read about them in newspaper articles. Furthermore, I was aware the National Gallery website featured information about it on the 'Collection' page that can be downloaded.

I set teachers two tasks, first to apply the ISEE and interpret the painting and second to source information about Constable and *The Cornfield* (Fig. 4.6) to talk about in the meeting. I provided them with The National Gallery website link and asked them to research information about the painting from the collection pages and any other website they could find. All of the teachers came prepared to this meeting with information about the artist and painting. Two of them had found additional websites on the internet. I asked one teacher to lead the group using the ISEE strategy. All the others, including the headteacher contributed to the discussion using notes they brought to the meeting. Their interpretations ranged from broad comments suggesting it represented a countryside with fields and church in the distance to more detailed descriptions of the context, for example a landscape setting in Suffolk showing a country lane with sheep and a dog 'bundling along' and 'a vista that leads the viewer' into fields and 'golden meadows' (Teachers' comments; LW fieldnotes 14/11/06). The session lasted one and a quarter hours and went into overtime.

Fig. 4.6: John Constable, *The Cornfield* , 1862,
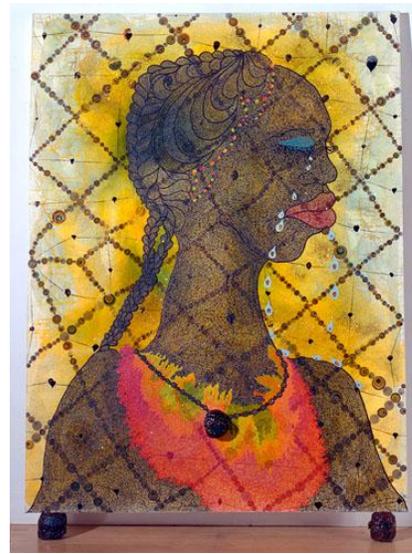oil on canvas, National Gallery, London

Fig. 4.7: Chris Ofili, *No Woman, No Cry* , 1998,
oil on canvas, Tate Modern, London

For the second session (28 November, 2006), I gave the teachers an A4 colour copy of Chris Ofili's painting *No Woman, No Cry* (Fig. 4.7) located in the Tate Modern collection. The Tate display card caption notes it is the artist's pictorial tribute to Stephen Lawrence, a black British teenager murdered in a racist attack in London at the age of 18 years in 1993 and I thought this might encourage discussion. Information from the Tate Collection site states that *No Woman, No Cry* (Fig. 4.7) reflects an emotional homage to Lawrence and was painted by an Afro-British artist, Chris Ofili[3] who was awarded the Turner Prize for it in 1998. In the previous session, I asked the teachers to research information about this painting as homework and suggested they use the Tate website. Again, I asked them to use the ISEE to interpret the painting and to think of questions to pose to pupils to encourage deeper thinking about it.

All teachers had found information about the painting on internet websites and there was an animated discussion focused on the political, emotional and social issues they interpreted in the painting. Several of them said they were shocked to learn about the subject matter,

---

[3] *No Woman No Cry* is a tribute to the London teenager Stephen Lawrence. The Metropolitan police investigation into his racially motivated murder was mishandled and a subsequent inquiry described the police force as institutionally racist. In each of the tears shed by the woman in the painting is a collaged image of Stephen Lawrence's face, while the words 'R.I.P. Stephen Lawrence' are just discernible beneath the layers of paint. Despite these specific references, the artist also intended the painting to be read in more general terms, as a universal portrayal of melancholy and grief. *(From Tate display caption September 2008)*

having initially admired it for its formal qualities of pattern, colour and textures. It emerged some had mistakenly interpreted its content as Afro-cultural imagery. The group discussed how knowing information about the painting had changed their view of it. Two of them said they could understand how using information might make pupils think more about what they observed, particularly in historical or cultural contexts.

One teacher was concerned about the appropriateness of this subject for young pupils and worried about making decisions about art information to use when they designed their own lessons in Cycle Three. Another expressed an opinion that teachers should use their own discretion or judgement based on their knowledge of their pupils. There was a general consensus that teachers should be informed and prepared to discuss subject matter or content of artworks. The team revisited my categories of art information (Table 8) and agreed to include the artist's name, title and at least one piece of information about the painting. The teachers recognised they might not always have information about the artist or painting to answer pupils' questions but decided it was important to make an effort to find out and tell them later. None of them came to the session with prepared questions to pose about the painting.

4.5 TEAM REFLECTION AND EVALUATION

In Cycle One, team reflection and evaluation centred on how prepared participants were for the next cycle and finalising data collection instruments and the research lesson plans. The last fifteen minutes of each practice session (#1 and #2) was dedicated time for reflection and evaluation of actions. While the team willingly set out to reflect on what had happened in practice sessions, we found it more difficult than anticipated mainly because some of the members were reluctant to talk about themselves or discuss their views of the ISEE. As co-ordinator, I found it difficult to get answers to questions I raised about this and sometimes had to target specific individuals to encourage discussion. Several team members (LWfieldnotes 11/12/06) admitted it made them feel uncomfortable to reflect aloud about their confidence, commitment and motivation. One teacher told me she was 'working at being reflective' (Journal 13/12/06). The team recognised evaluating group actions, rather than individual's actions were easier because the focus shifted to group strengths or limitations or criticism of the ISEE strategy. Team members were more willing to answer

questions like *What changes would you make to Step One?* than *What difficulties did you encounter when you used Step One?*

As co-ordinator, I focused team reflection on what happened in practice sessions and repeatedly asked teachers to explain, clarify or expand on comments they made. For example, when one teacher talked about 'knowing' about a painting when she researched the art information I questioned them about how they understood art information and where it undermined or challenged them when talking about paintings. They said it did not.

In a final reflection and evaluation meeting, the team used the cycle and research aims as the criteria for evaluation. The main aim of the research was, for example, to introduce generalist teachers to art history and this was also an aim of the cycle and subsequent evaluation. The team evaluated the ISEE and teachers' ability to apply it using art information to interpret a selected painting and judged it had been more successful than anticipated. All the teachers said they were content with the criteria of art information and had enjoyed finding out about the artworks. One teacher concluded it wasn't difficult to talk about a painting if you knew something about it and others agreed. However, there was slight apprehension on the part of two teachers who continued to speculate about how they would inform pupils. Most teachers found sourcing information about a painting or artist was easier than expected particularly through established websites. Their main concern was in researching and selecting information and the time factor involved.

The team evaluated the ISEE strategy and the teachers said it had helped them to talk about the paintings. But several of them expressed slight concerns about logistical problems such as keeping the steps separate and sequential, or forgetting information. There was a general consensus that this would resolve itself over time and with further practice.

The CPD training and support I gave them was also evaluated and the teachers were very positive in their feedback. Each member judged they were satisfied with the training and felt well prepared. I questioned whether further training was needed and remarked that no one had asked for extra help or raised any questions about the art information. One teacher commented this would likely change when the teaching began.

The team judged the art project had made a good start and was working well. Team spirit, motivation and interest levels were high as demonstrated by enthusiast discussions that took place in practice sessions and the length of time spent in these meetings. As an aside, one teacher suggested the atmosphere in training and practice sessions was evidence of their commitment and motivation (Journal 15/12/06). Another one mentioned meetings were well attended and all of them managed to complete homework between sessions.

Teachers' confidence to carry out the research lessons was identified as a key issue arising from evaluation. Most teachers' actions and reflective comments from team and practice sessions pointed mainly to increasing levels of confidence. They said practising the ISEE together had helped them and affected how they felt about talking about artworks. One teacher said she found herself 'tuning into' programmes about art on television because she 'knew about it' (Teacher D, 11/12/06). Two teachers said they felt more confident despite limited art experience. Another said she was happy to teach something completely new.

The team discussed the selection of paintings for the research lessons. One teacher was unhappy about using de Hooch's *Courtyard of a House in Delft* (Fig. 3.5) in three lessons because she said it would not sustain pupil interest. But another disagreed and argued it would reinforce the idea of three steps if they talked about the same painting in three lessons. Apart from this one objection, all the teachers and headteacher were satisfied with the selection.

When the team reviewed the teacher and observer record forms they expressed some concern about the logistics of completing them and asked if they could use tick boxes only for answers. I rejected this request because I was looking for more descriptive detail to 'flesh out' their evaluations having learned from my experience of the limited responses to questionnaires. The team made only slight amendments to these data collections instruments.

The team reviewed the findings of the pupil interviews and several teachers commented on how easily pupils had talked about the paintings. Given their age, the teachers were surprised by the scope of pupils' answers. We reviewed the research lesson plans (Table 9) in light of these findings and this resulted in three changes. The first concerned timetabling. Teachers judged that talking about paintings would take more time as evidenced by their

practice sessions. Three teachers concluded they would need more time to co-ordinate whole class discussion and an activity in the same lesson. One teacher was worried about trying to do too much in a lesson. Consequently, the length of time was altered from 10 to 15 minutes for Lessons One and Two and from 20 to 30 minutes for subsequent lessons to allow pupils an opportunity to 'really look' (Teacher C) at the painting and 'take time to digest it' (Teacher D).

The second was age-related. The two Reception teachers asked the team to reconsider lessons activities where pupils were required to write answers or draw given age-related limitations. They were also concerned about expectations that Reception pupils could work collaboratively with partners. The team reflected on these concerns and agreed to substitute role playing or acting in place of writing and drawing activities. The Reception teachers also opted for more structure in whole class discussions in the initial lessons.

A third change involved extending a planned portrait making activity in Lesson Ten into a longer lesson (one hour) to allow pupils to 'lead their own learning'(LWfieldnotes: 11/12/06) using the school's digital cameras to produce portrait photographs. (Although this amendment was agreed, changes forced the cancellation of Lesson Ten.)

The team reflected on the evaluation criteria for the ISEE strategy which were linked to the research aims (see Appendix 28) and judged them to be appropriate. They reflected on ways to gather different viewpoints and a suggestion was made that pupils take part in the final evaluation of the ISEE in Cycle Three and I agreed to organise this. At the end of the final meeting the team made recommendations for the next cycle, as reported on page 139.

4.6 RESEARCHER REFLECTIONS

Aside from shared team reflection, I also undertook to reflect further on the actions in my lead role as co-ordinator and art history researcher. My reflections on data, evaluations and findings, roles and responsibilities and selection of paintings are discussed in the next part of this section. To simplify reporting, I organised my reflections into three groups i) the action research, including sections on my role and what was learned about the methodology for changing practice (Research Question Six); teaching and learning (Research Question Five); teaching art history (Research Question One) and the selection of paintings. Elliott's (1991) claim that the continual momentum of reflection and

evaluation on actions, strengthens it was encouraging as I understood from this that the methodology improves with repeated practice.

4.6.1 Action research

Following the InSET training, my journal (1/11/06) recorded a 'steady increase in teacher/TAs input' as the morning progressed. I was pleased by the initial response to taking part in the research and thought everyone had enjoyed the demonstration lesson and understood how the ISEE strategy could be applied. One teacher said 'this is a new experience for me' and another commented 'it's like taking part in a game!' My journal reported a lightheartedness and much laughter during the morning (Journal 1/11/06). Following the InSET morning, the headteacher telephoned to say the teachers and TAs had found the morning useful and productive. One teacher had told her the project was 'the best thing we've done for ages' (Journal, 1/11/06). Another teacher told me 'this is manageable, it's common sense' about the ISEE strategy and these positive reactions gave me assurance about the art project.

I reflected on levels of confidence in two ways, the teachers and mine. I considered teachers' confidence using the ISEE, art information and talking reflectively about the paintings. I reviewed transcripts from training and practice sessions and it was clear that all the teachers were participating and contributing to discussions and activities, but they did so in their own individual ways. This was confirmed when I compared my fieldnotes with comments in my journal. For example, after the first practice session I recorded (14/11/06)

> '*Three teachers joined in brainstorming ideas about this painting. One made jokes about her interpretation (at her own expense) while another mainly listened, agreeing with what the others said'.*

In the final evaluation meeting, I noted in my journal (28/11/06)

> '*Teacher kept everyone laughing, clowning, telling us what her pupils will do with pieces of the jigsaw puzzle in Lesson 7... One teacher is mostly silent and spends a great deal of time writing down points she says she wants to remember about the paintings.'*

Because the action research formed one of five key actions for the School's improvement plan for the full academic year, 2006-2007 (see Appendix 29) it was understood to be important by the governors, headteacher, teachers and TAs. Although the teachers were given the option not to participate in the art project, the general expectation was that they

would. I reflected on whether teachers felt coerced or compelled to take part but concluded that everyone appeared genuinely keen to take part from evidence such as the headteacher and teachers taking the lead at times in practice sessions and the care they took to prepare for each session. I was aware of Whitehead and McNiff's (2006) warnings about potential difficulties in getting participants to work together and retain their commitment but I concluded there was an energy and a feeling of curiosity about the team.

During the cycle, I considered whether the TAs might feel overwhelmed by the action research but judged that their participation in the InSET morning was enthusiastic. I realised two of the three were able to debate their opinions with the teachers. One TA was confident to express her uneasiness about 'imposing' her ideas on others (Journal 1/10/06). Overall, comments from the headteacher showed that the TAs were talking positively about the project (Journal 3/11/06) and this gave me reassurance about their commitment.

Hopkins *et al.* (1994:61) criticise some in-service initiatives that are poorly conceptualised or make little effort to link participants' previous learning experiences with planned training and suggests this can negatively impact future ownership. My concerns about capturing the teachers' interest led me to reflect on how they reacted in discussions about art information and interpreting art. My journal and fieldnotes often recorded body language and the general uptake in participation and I used them to reflect on individual and team involvement. For example, my journal recorded 'a palpable excitement – a buzz' by the end of the InSET morning (Journal 1/11/06) and this made me revisit the ideas and opinions shared that day. Although I was largely pleased about the actions undertaken in the cycle I remained cautious about one teacher who often remained quietly in the background. I was reminded of Halsall's (1998:28) warning to researchers to be vigilant about reaching out to all team members and encouraging everyone's participation and commitment.

Several times my journal (18/10/06 and 26/11/06) recorded that teachers and governors referred to the art project as 'Laura's project'. I reviewed transcripts from team meetings and practice sessions to see whether I was dominating discussions. Inevitably I found my stamp on everything. My earlier concerns about creating a researcher dominated intervention were flagged up. In particular, I worried whether I had created the non equal

power base that Brydon-Miller *et al*. (2006:129) and Whitehead and McNiff (2006) criticise and if it would be possible to change this in subsequent cycles. By initially leading the action research, I recognised in the teachers' eyes I had assumed responsibility for it. If the team were to benefit from the reported strengths of this methodology, I recognised I had to shift control. I anticipated this would happen when the teachers began to teach in Cycle Two.

Time was another concern as several teachers noted that team meetings took a long time to carry out reflection and evaluation. By the second team evaluation meeting (28/11/06) teachers were noticeably under pressure to organise seasonal activities such as the School's Christmas production and I was conscious the action research was impacting on their personal, as well as professional time with homework tasks, team meetings, reading and preparation for the teaching. I questioned how I could alleviate these pressures and privately wondered whether this might have a negative effect on some teachers' perceptions of the project particularly when one teacher began greeting me, midway through the cycle, by saying 'Here comes trouble!' (Journal 5/11/06).

Elliott (1991) claims that the continual momentum of reflection and evaluation on actions or practice strengthens it and I found this encouraging as I considered the difficulties experienced by the team in carrying out joint reflection and evaluation in meetings. The problem was not in evaluating actions but rather in making reflections visible. I appreciated every teacher was reflecting on their own actions and those of others, however my dilemma was how to extract these reflections for the benefit of team discussions. I was envious of claims by Carr and Kemmis (1986), Schön (1983) and Whitehead and McNiff (2006) about the merits of collective self-reflection and the seeming ease with which they infer it is carried out. I returned to the literature on action research and collaborative partnerships and concluded this is an aspiration rather than a reliable outcome of the methodology. Strauss and Corbin (2002:130) recommend classroom researchers 'step back and critically analyse situations' but it was not that simple. As lead researcher I found it difficult to gauge whether reflections were deep and meaningful as not everyone appeared to share their thoughts easily. Individual personality traits meant some team members contributed more actively in meetings while others seemed to 'mull things over' (Journal 11/12/06) or remain silent. When I questioned the team about whether critical reflection and evaluation was

being carried out by only a handful of individuals we found it difficult to evaluate. This flagged up the importance of having documented evidence of individual and team reflection and I hoped the teacher record forms to be used in Cycle Two would provide this evidence.

4.6.2 Researcher roles

Hopkins (2002:129) claims classroom research is often done badly by amateurs who are not sufficiently practiced in using a methodology and this caused me to reflect on my own inexperience with action research. On more than one occasion, my journal expressed feelings of a lack of experience in the role of co-ordinator. In particular, I found it hard to co-ordinate *and* participate in action meetings as a team member, at the same time. I consulted the literature about conducting action research and participating in collaborative partnerships. I felt the weight of teachers' expectations as well as responsibility for their CPD training and recognised much of the onus had been on me to prepare them for action.

The pupil interviews were time-consuming as they involved transcribing 84 audio tapes. I also spent a considerable amount of time transcribing audio tapes from practice sessions and team meetings and collecting, coding and storing data. The headteacher and teachers told me they were relieved and thankful I had shouldered the organisation and planning for the art project. In the final reflection and evaluation meeting they told me they had appreciated their training and this boosted my confidence about my role in the research.

4.6.3 Methodology for changing practice

The team and I recognised that using reflection and evaluation as a methodology for examining and changing practice had helped the action team and me gain insight into how the teachers viewed interpreting paintings and how they experienced using art history. The action team judged that a strength of the methodology lay in the opportunity it provided for the teachers to talk about artworks from both a personal and professional context. Because of the repeated action of questioning and re-examining our understandings, we were able to identify teachers' early concerns, for example about co-ordinating the steps of the ISEE strategy, or accommodating learners' needs and to act on them immediately. This gave the team a sense of practical achievement. It also gave us the chance to refine our thinking about applying the ISEE, for example how to pose the ISEE questions and frame new sub-questions. We learned that through trial, error and discussion, the teachers could

experiment with this new area of the curriculum. Finally, the team and I learned that reflection on and evaluating actions was more difficult than it is presented in the literature and we found it took concerted team efforts to carry it out.

4.6.4 Teaching and Learning

4.6.4.1 Teachers

From the questionnaire responses I knew the teachers already engaged with fine art examples in their classrooms. I reflected on the teachers' tendency to talk about formal qualities of art and realised this was something they felt confident doing. When I questioned it one teacher told me 'it's the only thing I know to talk about in art' (Journal 8/12/06). I wondered how I might encourage teachers to talk about the paintings and decided to tap into one teacher's interest in symbolism.

Overall, the teachers had clear opinions of what they liked or didn't like in art and what they wanted to work with in the classroom. The questionnaire responses showed at least two of them did not want to work with 'Modern or contemporary art' although they changed their minds in the final team meeting when they discussed Lesson Nine.

I recognised some teachers and TAs were more inclined than others to talk about artworks and hypothesised the various levels of comfort and confidence engaging with art would likely be reflected in the way they taught the research lessons. I anticipated different teaching styles might create subtle changes to the ISEE strategy and reflected on how this might impact the pupils' engagement with paintings and use of the ISEE.

4.6.4.2 Pupils

During the cycle, I was approached on several occasions by pupils in the school playground asking me when lessons would begin. I realised pupils and their parents were aware of the art project and there was much excitement about it. I reflected on the findings from the pupil interviews, in particular their interest in, and ability to talk about paintings they were shown. Their general enthusiasm suggested they would be receptive to the art project and I was particularly pleased to find the youngest pupils in Reception Class were keen and able to participate. Their comments in the interviews were often as fulsome as older pupils in Years One and Two. The majority of pupils talked freely and without reservations about the

paintings. I was struck by their use of body movement and gestures to mime or emphasise what they said as it added another dimension to talking about paintings. The literature review made me aware of the role of miming and role play in Early Years art and general education (Barbe-Gall, 2005:18, Moll, 1990; Moyles, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978) and I was eager to explore this.

Pupils' inclination to create narratives and tell stories about the paintings was not surprising as it supported Hooper-Greenhill's (2004) and my own understanding of how young children engage with artworks. I concluded this might be a useful way for the teachers to disseminate the art information. I reflected that some pupils, not necessarily just the younger ones, created imaginary stories or scenarios about the paintings.

4.6.4.3 Art history subject knowledge

A finding from the staff questionnaire was that teachers' initial concerns for the research focused on teaching art information and in particular how to facilitate or transfer it to pupils (Journal 30/10/06). This is a common concern expressed by generalist classroom teachers and mirrored findings from several research studies, for example, Addison and Burgess (2003), Cox (2003) and Downing, Johnson and Kaur (2003). Although they said they were less concerned about it by the end of the cycle, I felt some of them continued to be apprehensive. One teacher said she struggled with fears about not knowing answers to pupils' questions about paintings. I had hoped discussions in the InSET morning and practice sessions would have addressed these concerns and given them more confidence to teach the research lessons. I questioned whether some teachers may have felt their professional standing or reputation was at stake and if this led them to mask any misgivings or doubts they may have harboured. It niggled me that no teacher or TA had commented on, questioned or argued any points about the artworks or art history I gave them.

I reflected on the two homework assignments and guessed that some teachers viewed the art information, sourced from internet websites, as more important than their own interpretations. Despite earlier discussion, I was concerned they might feel under pressure to find *right answers* in their interpretations. The teachers told me they enjoyed researching the paintings because it helped them understand them better. Two of them said they did not fully appreciate the Ofili painting until they *knew* the background of it. One teacher told

me, 'now I know the answer' (Journal 28/11/06) which worried me because I did not want teachers to assume the researched information represented the definitive 'answer'.

Several teachers mentioned concerns about selecting art information. One teacher had told me 'there's too much to chose from' (Journal, 12/12/06) and this made me reconsider my categories for selection. Although there were some unresolved concerns about art information most teachers said they wanted to begin teaching. Barrett (2002:3) claims that teachers teach when they have 'sufficient confidence to make a start' and this appeared to explain why the teachers said they felt able to proceed.

4.6.5 Selection of paintings

From the beginning, I was conscious that the selection of paintings would have a significant impact on teacher and pupil perceptions of the art project and ISEE strategy. On reflection, I judged most selections were successful. Responses to the staff questionnaire and pupil interview schedules were encouraging and I was satisfied by the variety of styles, cultures and timeframes I had chosen and thought they provided a good mixture of Western and non-Western examples. Findings from the questionnaires and interviews showed both teachers and pupils chose a painting to talk about based on personal preference in subject matter.

I was particularly pleased that Weight's painting, *Allegro Strepitoso* (Fig. 4.2) drew enthusiastic responses from pupils in the interviews. Most found it exciting and were happy to talk about it. When they did, they focused mainly on actions and expressions of the people and animals in the paintings. By comparison, the teachers were more inclined to talk about formal qualities of colour, shape and pattern. I was surprised only three of 84 pupils mentioned them.

I judged my selection of Chardin's *The House of Cards* (see Appendix 10) for the staff questionnaire was less successful and did not appear to stimulate the critical observation or response I had anticipated. Perhaps this was because the teachers and TAs were reluctant to voice their opinions or say 'the wrong thing' (InSET discussion, 30/10/06) or perhaps it was diplomacy. In only one questionnaire did a TA suggest 'I just don't like it.' In hindsight, I should have used *Allegro Strepitoso* (Fig. 4.2) with teachers, TAs and pupils,

not only for comparative purposes but because it might have encouraged broader or more distinctive interpretations.

Millais's *The Carpenter Shop* (Fig. 4.3) worked well with the ISEE strategy in the demonstration lesson. Staff told me they were intrigued by it and able to find and interpret many details such as the dove perched on a rung of the ladder, drops of red blood on the Christ Child's finger and the furtive or apprehensive expression of the boy with a bowl. The Step Two question: *Why is xyz included in the painting?* provided a good opportunity for them to work on the two levels, secular and non secular. When I posed the question: *Why do you think there are wood shavings on the floor?* several teachers recognised the significance of the wood and some answered by saying 'because Joseph was a carpenter' and 'the painting was set in a carpenter's workshop' (InSET 31/10/06) and 'it reminds me of the barn where Jesus was born' and 'it is a reference to the wooden cross'(InSET 31/10/06). This painting proved useful for explaining Panofsky's notion of symbolic meaning and literal and secondary levels of meaning. My concerns about using a painting on a Christian theme were unfounded as teachers and TAs were receptive to it and understood the point I was making about interpreting on different levels.

The comparison of Watt's *The Minotaur* (Fig. 4.4) and the unknown artist's *Elephant fed by his Keeper* (Fig. 4.5) provided a good example of cultural, historical and social contrasts and served the purpose of demonstrating how ISEE questions could be used to compare and contrast observations.

Constable's *The Cornfield* (Fig. 4.6) attracted teachers' attention although I thought it produced a staid, unadventurous discussion. Despite this, I was pleased it encouraged the teachers to talk about experiences and childhood memories of visiting relatives in similar rural settings. I was surprised none of the teachers criticised it or commented about it being old fashioned or traditional because I had thought one of them might have. When I raised this in the evaluation meeting, two or three teachers laughed but did not comment further. I concluded they found this painting non-threatening and a safe choice and it facilitated their application of ISEE questions.

I was delighted with the response to the last painting, Ofili's *No Woman No Cry* (Fig. 4.7) which elicited a great deal of discussion and interest. Teachers liked the mixed media

because it offered them something different to discuss and all of them were intrigued by the hidden message they found in the woman's teardrops. On reflection, this painting worked well with the ISEE as it focused attention to detail and this produced rich discussion. Moreover, it raised their awareness of the importance of selecting artworks and information to use in class discussion and the impact this might have on pupils.

4.7 TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CYCLE TWO

The team recognised the importance of cultivating a particular learning environment in the research lessons and so recommended one where teachers and pupils were encouraged to take risks. Another recommendation was for the teachers to remain open minded in their teaching and to try out new ideas as they arose. Another was for pupils to be told there were 'no right or wrong answers' when they interpreted art (Barrett, 2003). I compiled the following list from team recommendations made during the cycle and from my own reflections at the end of it and emailed them to teachers (16/12/06).

For teachers to:

- Take greater ownership of lessons in preparation for the design and teaching in Cycle Two

- Adapt/ change lesson plans where necessary and communicate the rationale to team members. Reporting these changes is important for evaluation

- Be flexible to see what happens and report what works and what doesn't

- Along with four ISEE questions, create new sub-questions to deepen and extend pupils' thinking about the paintings

- Agree a shared vocabulary with pupils and team members

- Remain observant of pupils' learning needs and any strategies they devise.

- Consider amendments to the ISEE.

For researcher:

- Reduce control, shift and share power base
- Let others lead action meetings and discussions
- Encourage deeper reflection by pinpointing relevant points for discussion.