Introduction

Eurythmy is one of the most typical creative art curricula in Waldorf education based on Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy. It is an art of movement combined with language, music and spiritual quality from the early of 20 century. Human body is the instrument for expression in Eurythmy. The practice of Eurythmy is a tool to strengthen capacities of will, and open up and enliven the soul as an instrument for special education. All students in Waldorf schools need to experience Eurythmy. And the students with special needs were also requested to do so.

The first Waldorf school was founded in 1919 in Stuttgart. There are over 1,000 independent Waldorf schools, 1,400 kindergartens 120 special remedial institutions, 68 social and teacher training institutions in Europe, South America, Africa and Asia located in approximately sixty countries throughout the world. There are also Waldorf-based public and Charter schools, homeschooling environments, and schools for special education, and Waldorf's ideas are being reproduced, often less in whole than in part, in an expanding number of public and private sectors in the world today.

The Waldorf Education Schools has received attention in recent years in Taiwan. There are 6 Waldorf schools in Taiwan. Four schools are in private sectors and 2 in public sectors. There are also a growing number of kindergartens based on Waldorf education ideal in Taiwan. The expanding numbers of Waldorf education schools explain some attractive curricula to people. And Eurythmy is the core curriculum for Waldorf Education. Therefore, it motivated me to explore the theory and the meanings of Eurythmy. This is my first motivation for this study.

The call of education revolution has initiated for more than ten years in Taiwan. But until now, the ideal of focusing on educating human being in the whole is still lacking. Even though the implementation of Grade 1-9 National Curriculum happened in Taiwan in recent years, the climate of education is still hardly changed. In Taiwan the curricula and instructions are guided by intelligent approach. However, Eurythmy is designed for
human body, soul and spirit that is worthy to explore for reflections of our traditional curricula. This is the second motivation for this study.

Special education itself is full of innovation and challenge. The typical teaching skills of special education normally set on modifying the behavior disorder, stimulating gross and fine motors of human body. The approaches seldom touch human inward parts e.g. soul and spirit. However, Waldorf education is aimed to educate the individual in view of a ‘whole’ person including body, soul and spirit and this is meaningful especially for special education. Special education is also called ‘curative education’ in Waldorf education. Steiner (1972) and Morrison (1988) treated some special needs children by prescribed Eurythmy and the children improved. So it’s worthy to explore. This is my 3rd motivation.

Based on above three motivations, this study is aimed: (1) to discover the origin of Eurythmy; (2) to analyze theoretical contents of Eurythmy; (3) to evaluate the advantages, disadvantages of Eurythmy; (4) to find out the implications of Eurythmy in special educational theory and practice. A pilot study was designed to explore the Eurythmy curriculum for students with cognitive disabilities in Taiwan and the results were also discussed.

Method

This study used the method of educational hermeneutics to explore Eurythmy curriculum in Waldorf Education firstly, then a pilot study was implemented for students with cognitive disabilities in a special class. Action research was used in the pilot study. The sources of data for analyzing came from Chinese, English translations of Rodolf Steiner’s books, speeches, writings, related research reports. The papers in Steiner Archive websites (http://www.rsarchive.org/) and Steinerbooks Spiritual Research Center website (http://steinerbooks.org/research/archive.php) were also used.

A trial Eurythmy curriculum was designed for 3 students with cognitive disabilities. Quick Neurological Screening Test (QNST), Evaluation of 4 seasons, observations, interviews and teaching reflections were used to collect data for the pilot study.

Results and discussions

The origin of Eurythmy
In 1912 Steiner’s wife undertook the Eurythmy art training. In 1919 the first Waldorf school started in Germany, Eurythmy became a movement curriculum. In 1921 Steiner delivered 12 Curative Eurythmy lectures to doctors, therapists and teachers. Eurythmy can be a therapy for children with disabilities since then. Steiner’s Eurythmy was influenced by Goethe’s philosophy, Schopenhauer’s thought of ‘Reincarnation’ and the ancient western language system e.g. the vowels and consonants.
The theoretical contents of Eurythmy

Eurythmy was created for experiencing the rhythm and developing 'ego'. It adopts the rhythms in the nature and language. The rule of contrast is commonly used in designing. Vowel is always the expression of some aspect of feeling life of the soul. The consonants mean out of the perception and imitation of the external object. Table 1 presented some consonants used in Eurythmy by their meaning, movements / function and pictures.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant</th>
<th>meaning</th>
<th>movement/function</th>
<th>Movement picture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>warmth</td>
<td>An embracing or cradling gesture, similar to cradling a small infant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>ground</td>
<td>Push out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>light</td>
<td>Fist gesture, palm outward, open hands as if the light falling down</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>water</td>
<td>Push in front as hitting water</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>Connecting w/ourside</td>
<td>Palm is outward, one hand is up, the other hand is down, as if opening window</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td></td>
<td>©downward, cutting gesture with one or both arms fully extended. ©this gesture enables to stimulate digesting system.(Glas, 1971)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>life</td>
<td>A vertical, upward gesture using both arms in unison.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>wind</td>
<td>Stretch both hands, right hand forward, left hand backward, similar to wind blowing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>air</td>
<td>Both hands wave forward, then touch the air</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td></td>
<td>A forward rolling, rotating, or cartwheel motion of 360° with both arms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hands or feet cut following the shape of S, like snake.</td>
<td>$\mathbb{S}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>tree</td>
<td>Both hands put on head or shoulders as if growing a tree.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w</td>
<td>sea</td>
<td>Both hands row like waves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch</td>
<td>wind</td>
<td>Both hands stretch in the front</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Ogletree (1976) and Kirchner-Bockholt (2004)
The advantages, disadvantages of Eurythmy
The advantages of Eurythmy include inspiring the development of children's body, soul and spirit and designed according to children's developmental ages. The integration and diversity of curricula can meet the needs of normal children and children with special needs. The disadvantages include most effects from personal experience not from empirical researches. It's easy to be misunderstood as the exercise, music, dance or movement simply.

The implications of Eurythmy in special educational theory and practice.
It implied that Eurythmy's anthroposophical basis, respecting the nature, loving the earth, integrated with the elements of culture and treating education as therapy can complement and supplement existing teaching materials and provide a practical resource in special education.

A pilot study
The results for pilot study carried out by 3 students in a special class were found as: (1) Three students' scores of post-test in QNST were obviously higher than pre-test; (2) The balance and coordination in body movements for the 3 students were raised after the intervention of Eurythmy curriculum in Waldorf Education; (3) The aspects of feeling and thinking including the motivation, self-confidence, activeness, aesthetic feeling, music sense and the cognition of seasons in these 3 students after teaching intervention the students presented different positive levels of transformation after intervention; (4) The researcher has changed her viewpoints in the process of study from shaping the children with disabilities to fix and survive in the society to focusing on their feeling and thinking; (5) The curriculum innovation was facilitated for the researcher in light of the improvement of the students with cognitive disabilities through the integration with the elements of Waldorf Education.

Conclusion
Waldorf education is a kind of alternative education. Eurythmy is a most typical and unique curriculum in Waldorf education. The descriptions of its development, contents, advantages, disadvantages, implications and practice were presented. It would make sense for special education curriculum design reform. More empirical researches were expected to be implanted for supporting its practice.
References


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