Exploring and extending practitioner responses to young children's art-making

Mona Sakr, Jacqueline Harding
Middlesex University, London, UK

While research in early childhood has celebrated young children's art-making for its social, emotional, intellectual and physical learning opportunities (e.g. Wright, 2012; Malin, 2013; Kolbe, 2005; Vecchi, 2010), classroom observations in the UK suggest a lack of confidence among early years practitioners when supporting such activities (Welch, 1995; Hawkins, 2002; Eckhoff, 2011). This presentation describes how a participatory research project brought together a group of ten Early Years practitioners as a ‘community of learners’ (Rogoff, 2001) in order to explore and extend the way they responded to and facilitated young children's art-making. Through workshops, directed reflections, observations and pedagogic documentation, the practitioners developed new insights into the multi-dimensional processes and experiences of art-making, and how these could be supported and enriched through adult input. This presentation showcases data from our interviews with practitioners and ethnographic observations of the workshops in order to demonstrate the practitioners' developing understandings and approaches. The findings from this research suggest what a ‘conversational pedagogy’ in early childhood art, as advocated by Eckhoff (2013), might look like ‘on the ground’ and the practical ways that practitioners can engage with the diverse facets of art-making including: the experiential; the embodied; the visual; the material; the thematic and the contextual (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2013).

References


