

Contribution of Systematic Exploration of Artworks in Raising Children's Critical Thinking and Empathy about Friendship and Difference through Early Years

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Abstract

This paper presents a study aimed at investigating 3- to 4-year old children's perceptions of friendship and difference and the effects of the systematic use of art on these issues. There is a considerable number of scholars suggesting that art-based experience, as a form of expressive way of knowing, can contribute to the development of creative and critical thinking. The *Project Zero* research program from Harvard Graduate School of Education and the *Philosophy for Children (P4C)* pedagogical movement highlight the importance of promoting from the preschool age a critical way of thinking which exceeds mere argumentation and identifies with critical re-evaluation of the way we conceive reality and act. Our intervention was applied to 83 children from five preschool settings. Children were supported to systematically explore artworks of aesthetic value according to *Transformative Learning Through Aesthetic Experience (TLTAE)* method aiming to raise participants' creativity and critical reflection upon stereotypical assumptions. The principles of *Philosophy for Children (P4C)* movement were further exploited in order to enhance reflective dialogue based on emerging meanings from narrative artworks and creative activities. A questionnaire with images was applied to all children before and after the intervention. The findings suggest that post-intervention children had a more enhanced understanding of friendship and difference, an increased level of mutual acceptance, a better appreciation of socializing positively with peers. Further integration of art and art-related methods in the learning process is needed in order to examine long term results.

Keywords: critical thinking, empathy, friendship, difference, early years, art-based intervention

1. Introduction

Early years are considered as a significant period during which enriched experiences play a crucial role in shaping children's cognitive and socio-emotional development. Education is important to engage learners, in general, and children, in particular, in various, participatory of the whole self and thought-provoking learning experiences (D'Olimpio & Peterson, 2018; Kokkos, 2017; Rogers, 1961). There is a considerable number of scholars suggesting that art-based experience, as a form of expressive way of knowing, can contribute to the development of creative and critical thinking (Dewey, 1934/1980; Eisner, 1997; Kokkos, 2011; Perkins, 1994). Our interest here is the extent to which, and the ways in which, children's educational engagements with artworks hold the potential to enrich their perception and shape their attitudes regarding notions of friendship and difference.

Various empirical and theoretical approaches have demonstrated the possibility that children could be engaged in a holistic and critical approach of social issues which incorporates cognitive as well as affective dimensions of thinking (Gardner, 1999; Perkins, 2003). *Project Zero* research program from the Harvard Graduate School of Education highlights the significance of art in cultivating critical thinking through early years education (Kokkos, 2017). *Philosophy for children* (P4C) movement provides supporting evidence about developing, in practice, empathy and reflective skills in children through systematic exploration of the narratives included in artworks (Gasparatou, 2014; Haynes, 2009). *Transformative learning through aesthetic experience* (TLTAE) constitutes a theoretical and methodological framework for the design of art-based interventions enabling learners' creativity and critical reflection upon stereotypical assumptions (Kokkos and associates, 2011; Kokkos, 2013).

2. Framework

2.1 Peer-relationships and Friendship

Children's social and emotional competences are connected to the acquisition of skills and behaviors which allow the development of positive relationships throughout the lifespan; thus contributing to psychosocial development and well-being (Hatzichristou & associates, 2011). A school environment nurturing peer-relations and development of friendships based on mutual acceptance provides a powerful context for fostering these skills. A considerable body of psychological research supports the central role that friendships play in children's capacity to grow and develop socially, emotionally and cognitively (Avgitidou, 1997; Coelho, Torres, Fernandes, & Santos, 2017; Fink & Hughes, 2019). Friendship "is defined as a mutually reciprocated dyadic relationship" while it is mentioned that special emphasis should be given on the consequences of being rejected by the peer group and feeling a lack of belonging among children (Fink & Hughes, 2019, p. 29). Companionship, shared intimacy and a way to reach thoughts, feelings and desires of another are acknowledged as qualities of friendship provided at every life stage and despite gender (Fink & Hughes, 2019).

The rapidly changing socio-cultural contexts, we live in, are also reflected in schools which are turned into increasingly diverse systems. Research reveals that newcomer children, who enter mainstream day-care groups, experience various challenges because of the already established friendship alliances, also referred to as peer cultures and have to deal with competition, struggle for position and relational aggression (Kalkman & Clark, 2017). Furthermore, it is acknowledged that "children who are comfortable interacting with people

of different ethnic, religious and racial backgrounds are at a clear advantage” (Fink & Hughes, 2019, p. 30). Through cross-racial friendships children learn the significance of inclusion and team spirit, as well as the negative and the dysfunctional outcomes of prejudices, stereotypes and exclusion. They develop their social awareness and self-esteem.

A core feature that has received the attention of scholars considering the relevant to friendship and peer relationships research is children’s theory of mind understanding. It is considered as the “ability to attribute mental states (such as thoughts, feelings and desires) to others, and to use this understanding to predict and explain behavior” (Fink & Hughes, 2019, p. 29). Theory of mind is associated with the development of one’s ability to understand and discuss thoughts, feelings and desires. This, in turn, is associated with the promotion of positive interactions with peers and the ability to resolve conflicts based on the appreciation of reciprocity and the awareness of the significance of different points of view (Fink & Hughes, 2019, p. 30). Theory of mind grows with age as well as with socio-emotional experiences and shapes the way children perceive themselves in relation to others and their interaction with them.

2.1 Implications from Previous Research

Living in contemporary societies which are identified as increasingly heterogeneous requires citizens which will have the opportunities, as they grow up, to develop capacities to deal with differences and communicate effectively with others. However, it is noticed that prejudicial attitude towards ‘outsiders’ is still pervasive, also affecting cross-ethnic friendships between children (Serdiouk, Wilson, Gest, & Berry, 2019). Cross-ethnic friendships are considered as an indicator of positive intergroup attitudes and conditions of school safety among children. Teachers’ emotional support, through their employment of practices which acknowledge children’s interests and views and encourage their self-expression, also provides students with a sense of empowerment and self-confidence in order to engage positively with peers (Serdiouk, Wilson, Gest, & Berry, 2019).

Experimental studies have shown that children demonstrate a range of signs of intergroup biases from early in development, like 3- to 5- years old, such as those in favor of own-gender and own-race children. Explicit education about prejudice, structured intergroup contact and imagined contact with members of other groups have been identified as important childhood experiences associated with reduced intergroup bias (Skinner & Meltzoff, 2019). Furthermore, theory and research from the field of multicultural art education indicates that this kind of education has become superficial and that teachers only guide students through art projects without communicating the context of the art (Acuff, 2018). A need for teaching through a framework of critical multiculturalism which takes into consideration an appreciation of the cultural dimensions which affect the way we think, feel and act is further stressed (Acuff, 2018).

In Greece, there is a growing body of research on issues around friendship emerging from studies conducted mainly in Kindergartens. Some of the issues that these studies deal with, are: (a) appreciating the associations between specific social skills and friendship in order to predict phenomena of social exclusion, in-school violence etc. and improve children’s social competence (Mpeazidou & Mpotsoglou, 2016), (b) understanding the concept of friendship and resolving conflicts and problems in preschool education through the use of ICTs (Papathanasiou & Tounta, 2016), (c) associating the perceived quality of children’s relationship with their best friend with positive feelings such as hope and optimism (Balbagadi, 2016). However, it is noted that there is a limited body of research on the

employment of innovative methods and practices which promote new approaches to the education of preschool children in relation to these issues. With this study, we intended to contribute towards the aforementioned gap.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Aims and Objectives-research Rationale

This paper presents a study aimed at investigating 3- to 4-year-old children's perceptions of friendship and difference and the effects of the systematic use of art on these issues, which was conducted as part of a larger educational project, the Art in Children's Life program (AinCL). A basic hypothesis was that systematic use of art for educational reasons could raise critical reflection skills and empathy through early years, aiming to an increased self/social-awareness, lifelong empowerment and well-being. More specifically, the goal of this study was to examine whether the introduction of systematic use of art in children's life during the implementation of an educational program could: (a) facilitate the development of critical thinking through early years on these issues, (b) enrich children's perceptions about the "self" and the "other", (c) strengthen positive interactions in early childhood settings and improve the quality of peer-relationships (d) contribute to children's social and emotional well-being by reinforcing a sense of mutual respect and belonging.

Our intervention was based on previous theory and research which supports that arts inclusion in education starting from early childhood may foster cognitive and affective dimensions of thinking, promote perspective-taking growth and imagination, and provide a meaningful and engaging educative and emancipating experience (Broudy, 1987; Dewey, 1933, 1934/1980; D'Olimpio & Peterson, 2018; Gardner, 1990; Greene, 2000; Haynes, 2009; Kokkos, 2017; Mages, 2018). Critical thinking exceeds beyond mere intellectual capacities such as analysis and synthesis (Kokkos, 2010). It involves a developmentally growing ability to reflect on taken-for-granted assumptions driving our ideas and actions. Moreover, it involves the dynamics to re-evaluate them through alternative perspectives and be able to make more informed choices (Mezirow, 2007).

3.2 Participants and Method

Eighty three children (n=83, 40 girls and 43 boys), aged 3- to 4-years-old, from five public preschool settings were involved in this study. Preschool settings were located in a city of 90.000 inhabitants in northwestern Greece. The children were from various socioeconomic-status families. All parents were informed in advance of the purposes of the study. Children had the right to withdraw in any time and were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. During the 5-week AinCL program, children were asked to: (a) systematically explore artworks of aesthetic value according to *Transformative learning through aesthetic experience* method (TLTAE), (b) engage in creative activities and reflective dialogue based on the emerging meanings from artworks, according to *Philosophy for children* (P4C) practice. The intervention was implemented by students from the Department of Early Years Learning and Care, School of Social Sciences, University of Ioannina, who participated voluntarily and were appropriately trained and supervised.

Because of the orientation of the methods used towards the development of critical thinking and empathy, a basic interest during the intervention was to examine the development of the children's skill to creatively-critically and empathetically examine the issues at hand. *Transformative learning through aesthetic experience method* (TLTAE) outcomes evaluation

consists of comparing initial ideas of the participants and the ideas resulting from the process at the end of the implementation. A main aim of this comparison is to examine the development of the learners' ability to acknowledge divergent aspects of the topics discussed and the enrichment of their points of view.

Qualitative data derived from observations during the implementation were used in order to highlight differentiations in children's views about friendship and difference. However, due to the early age of our target group, an age-friendly questionnaire containing images was applied to all children, before and after the study, in order to facilitate the investigation of children's pre-intervention and post-intervention views/understandings about certain aspects of self/other and friendship. The questionnaire consisted of 4 questions, three of which with four options and the fourth with eight options. Children could choose one or more of these options. The first two questions examined children's perceptions regarding the role that differences in gender, ethnicity and external characteristics, such as those in appearance, weight-height, hair-skin color and kinetic abilities, can play in making friends. The third question examined children's perceptions about loneliness and companionship while the fourth, the role of specific behaviors in making friends.

3.3 Procedure

The research team contacted the preschool centers using a list available in official registries and invited them to participate in the project. After the directive boards of the participating day-care centers gave a positive answer, teachers and parents were invited to collaborate in the study. Researchers asked permission for their children to participate. The intervention was implemented by students from the Department of Early Years Learning and Care, School of Social Sciences, University of Ioannina, who participated voluntarily and were appropriately trained and supervised. The 5-week (1 day per week) program was basically based on the exploitation of *Transformative learning through aesthetic experience* (TLTAE) method combined with basic principles of *Philosophy for children* (P4C) practice. Structured psycho-educational activities (Hatzichristou & associates, 2011) were used in order to support children's active interest and participation during the sessions and to promote experiential learning. Activities could also serve as a context of interaction permitting, through observation, further evaluation of growing shifts in children's perceptions of friendship and difference.

An implementation of *Transformative learning through aesthetic experience* (TLTAE) method consists, in general, of the following basic stages: 1) determination of the need to critically and creatively examine a topic, 2) the participants' expressed ideas about the topic, 3) identification of critical questions that should be approached, 4) selection of works of art and their association to the critical questions, 5) elaboration of the works of art and their association to the critical questions, 6) reflection on the experience. In our case, the method was adjusted in order to meet the needs and cognitive abilities of the specific age. *Philosophy for children* (P4C) practice, based on M. Lipman's work, contributed children's active participation, cooperation and engagement in a reflective dialogue through systematic exploration of narrative artworks and the emerging meanings (D'Olimpio & Peterson, 2018; Gasparatou, 2014). Because of the pre-confirmed need to critically examine with children stereotypic assumptions related to the basic topic, stage one of the TLTAE method was omitted. Stage four was prepared by the educators.

Due to their unconventional and symbolic character as well as their relation to the life experiences of the learners, the artworks chosen for the systematic exploration included the

paintings “New Kids in the Neighborhood” by Norman Rockwell, “The Carols” by N. Lytras and the poem “If all the kids on earth” by Y. Ritsos which the children had the chance to hear by the Sp. Lambros choir, sing and dance. According to TLTAE method, the elaboration of artworks is ensured with the use of “Visible thinking”, a 4-phases technique initially introduced by D. Perkins (1994) and his associates. It includes thinking routines such as: “What's going on here?”, “What do you see that makes you say so?”, “What surprises you?” or “What troubles you?”, “what do you feel?” which encourage student’s dispositions to pay attention to the other side of the case, question the evidence, look beyond obvious possibilities etc. (Perkins, 2003)

The illustrated fairy tale “El temido enemigo” / “the dreaded enemy”, “...*A story of love and hate, of humility and vanity, which explains how a dreaded enemy could become our best friend...*” by Jorge Bucay was used during the first session as a narrative artwork containing meanings that could offer a wide range of triggers for critical thinking on the topic at hand and ease a process of inquiry and reflection dialogue between children, facilitated by the pre-service teachers. The basic aim was the narrative artwork to become a useful stimulus for children in order to engage imaginatively and sympathetically with diverse characters and scenarios in a protected fiction context, to become familiar with different perceptions of friendship, and be encouraged to generate critical questions (i.e. “*Why did the king want to harm the magician?*”). The first session concluded with a role-play or, alternatively, a drawing activity based on the characters of the fairy tale and the meanings emerged during discussion.

Critical questions raised by the children during the first session were exploited in shaping critical questions that would be linked to the chosen artworks, thus contributing to their critical exploration during the coordination of the fifth stage of TLTAE method (fifth stage: elaborating the works of art and linking them to the critical questions - second, third & fourth session of the intervention). The chosen artworks were distributed during the second, third and fourth session respectively, were elaborated according to Visible Thinking routines technique (Perkins, 1994) and were linked to critical questions such as “*Would you have a friend from another country with a different color from you and why?*”. Each session concluded with a psycho-educational activity such as the activity “We are alike when it comes to the heart...” and “The chain” (Hatzichristou & associates, 2011) during which children had to follow specific instructions (i.e. to observe a green and a red apple from outside and then from the inside) and processed certain questions such as “Is it probable that we judge others just from their appearance?”, “Do we all have both similarities and differences?”, “How would our lives be if we were all the same?”

Finally, the reflection on the experience, which is a vital part of the method, during the sixth stage, was accomplished during the fifth session of the intervention. Our main interest was to involve students in a reflective dialogue on the basic points about friendship and difference that previous sessions focused on. The discussion was triggered by an engaging educational activity during which children were asked to prepare “the pizza of friendship” by choosing ingredients (images of ingredients provided from old magazines) with the criterion that each one represents a basic element of friendship. Some of the ingredients that children matched with important friendship elements were: tomato with love, mushrooms with respectfulness, cheese with closeness and olives with trust. An important comment pointed out by most of the groups of children, was that the contribution of different ingredients (=differences between people) is what makes the pizza (=friendship) recipe more successful. Another conclusion was that although we may have differences we are all alike when it comes to the

heart and that is all that matters in order to make friends.

4. Findings

4.1 Results Presentation

Presentation of results is realized in two levels: 1) General view of the differentiations and possible shifts in children's points of view as a group and 2) Shifts per child and per point of view in order to examine the enrichment of perceptions

4.1.1 General View of the Differentiations and Possible Shifts in Children's Points of View as a Group

The key results of the data analysis per question are presented below. Questions could be categorized as follows, representing post intervention shifts regarding two basic axis: 1) children's perceptions about dimensions of difference such as gender, ethnicity as well as external characteristics such as appearance, weight-height, hair-skin color and kinetic abilities and their role in making friends (Q1 & Q2 respectively) 2) children's perceptions about loneliness and companionship as well as important behaviors which determine children's decisions to make friends (Q3 & Q4 respectively)

Regarding the first axis, children were asked to answer two questions: 1) "*Which children can become friends?*" and 2) "Is it possible for children who differ externally to become friends?" They had to choose between four possible answers for the first question and four possible answers for the second question, all accompanied by adequate images.

Q1: "*Which children can become friends?*"

Results indicate that there are small differentiations between children's pre and post intervention answers as far as "boys with boys" and "girls with girls" friendships is concerned, namely 6.02% and 2.4% decrease, respectively. In contrast, there is a 25.31% increase regarding "boys with girls" answer and a 40.96% increase regarding "children from different countries" answer. There were no significant differences between boys and girls answers as far as "boys with boys" and "girls with girls" choices is concerned (Table 1).

Table 1. Children Who can Become Friends

A		B		C		D	
Boys with boys		Girls with girls		Boys with girls		Children from different countries	
n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
-5	-6.02	-2	-2.4	+21	+25.31	+34	+40.96

Differentiations in children's views about certain dimensions of friendship and difference.

Q2: "*Is it possible for children who differ externally to become friends?*"

Results show alterations at all four possible answers to the question, namely, a 22.90% increase regarding "appearance (clothes, eyeglasses)" answer, a 38.55% increase regarding

“weight-height”, a 36.15% for “hair-skin color”, and a 15.66% increase for “kinetic abilities” answer. Children’s experiences with peers of different kinetic abilities at some of the day care centers may have affected the lower amount as far as the fourth answer (“kinetic abilities”) is concerned (Table 2).

Table 2. The Role of External Differences in Friendship

A		B		C		D	
Appearance (clothes, eyeglasses)		Weight-height		Hair-skin color		Kinetic abilities	
n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
+19	+22.90	+32	+38.55	+30	+36.15	+13	+15.66

Differentiations in children’s views about the role of external differences in friendship.

Regarding the second axis, children were asked to answer two more questions: 3) “*When do you feel better at school?*” and 4) “*Which of the following behaviors is most important for you in order to make friends?*” They had to choose between four possible answers for the third question and eight possible answers for the fourth question, all accompanied by adequate images.

Q3: “*When do you feel better at school?*”

Most differences in pre and post intervention answers are identified to answers A (When you are alone - boys’ answers) and B (When you are alone – girls’ answers). Before intervention, children seem to dislike being alone at school at a 83.72% (n=43) for boys and a 65.00% (n=40) for girls. After intervention, the aforementioned percentages are increased by 9.28% and 12.50% respectively. Furthermore, children seem to enjoy the company of their best friend at 69.88% before intervention and 68.67% after intervention. Similarly, they enjoy joining the company of other children at 69.88% before intervention and 71.08% after intervention (Table 3).

Table 3. Feeling Better at School

A		B		C		D	
When you are alone (boys, n=43)		When you are alone (girls, n=40)		When you are with your best friend		When you join the company of other children	
n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
-4	-9.28	-5	-12.50	-1	-1.21	+1	+1.20

Differentiations in children’s views about the role of companionship and loneliness in feeling better at school.

Q4: “Which of the following behaviors is most important for you in order to make friends?”

Most differences in pre and post intervention answers are identified to answers B (Be invited to one’s birthday) with a decrease of 24.10%, D (Love each other) with an increase of 14.45%, E (Help each other) with an increase of 21.69%, F (Trust each other) with an increase of 13.24%, G (Argue with) with a decrease of 8.44%, H (Spend quality time together) with an increase of 16.86%. Comparing their pre and post intervention answers, children seem to have had from the beginning a considerable appreciation of behaviors such as playing together (71.09%), and be invited to one’s birthday (61.45%) (Table 4).

Table 4. Behaviors Affecting Friendship Making

A		B		C		D	
Play together		Be invited to one’s birthday		Share things		Love each other	
n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
-1	-1.21	-20	-24.10	+3	+3.61	+12	+14.45
E		F		G		H	
Help each other		Trust		Argue		Spend quality time together	
n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
+18	+21.69	+11	+13.24	-7	-8.44	+14	+16.86

Differentiations in children’s views about the role of certain behaviors in making friends.

4.1.2 Shifts per Child and per Point of View in Order to Examine the Enrichment of Perceptions

Analysis per child and per view showed that, by the end of the intervention, children enriched their points of view concerning specific dimensions of friendship and difference that were processed during the process. Specifically, according to the results, 31 children (16 boys – 15 girls) were enriched with the option that boys can become friends with girls and 36 children (21 boys – 15 girls) with the option that children from different countries can become friends as well. It is worth mentioning that 16 of the aforementioned children also skipped their initial choices, namely the options that boys can become friends with boys and that girls can become friends with girls. As concerns the possibility for children who differ externally to become friends, 29 children (16 boys – 13 girls) chose the option of difference in appearance (clothes, eyeglasses), 39 children (20 boys – 19 girls) the difference in weight-height, 33 children (18 boys – 15 girls) the difference in hair-skin color and 22 children (12 boys – 10 girls) the difference in kinetic abilities. Furthermore, 19 children (8 boys – 11 girls) were enriched with the option that they feel better at school when they are with their best friend and 16 children (9 boys – 7 girls) with the option that they feel better at school when they join the company of other children. Additionally, 15 children (7 boys – 8 girls) enriched their views with the option of playing with others as an important behavior in order to make friends, 6 children (3 boys – 3 girls) with the option of being invited to one’s birthday, 20 children (10 boys – 10 girls) with the option of sharing things, 23 children (11 boys – 12 girls) with the option of loving each other, 31 children (11 boys – 20 girls) with the option of

offering help to each other when needed, 16 children (8 boys – 8 girls) with the option of trusting each other and 23 children (12 boys – 11 girls) with the option of spending quality time together.

4.2 Discussion

Quantitative data combined with observation notes which were kept during the process, indicate that during and after the implementation children demonstrated an increased awareness of the diversity of human community, empathy and respect to each other's distinctive characteristics. All these are considered as important cognitive, emotional and social skills, contributing to the development of positive relationships throughout the lifespan (Hatzichristou & associates, 2011). There were even cases of previous aggressive behaviors between specific children which were totally transformed afterwards, confirming the transformational dynamics of art-based interventions based on systematic exploration of artworks (Mezirow, 2007). These data also support the importance of promoting critical and empathetic learning, starting from early childhood (Gasparatou, 2014; Haynes, 2009).

In particular, the findings suggest that post-intervention children had a more enhanced understanding of friendship despite gender, origin, race and external appearance, an increased level of mutual acceptance despite external differences they might have, and a better appreciation of socializing positively with peers through loving, helping, trusting, spending quality time with others. Considering relevant theory and research, children were engaged in deeper understandings about friendship and difference, experiencing an early childhood psycho-educational art-based intervention which may be associated with reduced intergroup bias (Skinner & Meltzoff, 2019) and developmentally positive interactions (Avgitidou, 1997; Coelho, Torres, Fernandes, & Santos, 2017; Fink & Hughes, 2019)

Analysis per child and per point of view showed that the application of the method contributed significantly in enriching each child's perceptions of friendship and difference with various perspectives through the empowerment of creative, critical and empathetic thinking on the issues at hand. Children showed an enhanced interest in questioning about meanings driven from stories and artworks they hear, share and explore through reflective dialogue as well as participating in meaningful and engaging experiences and cooperating with others in creative learning activities. These findings meet the criteria of both *Philosophy for children* (P4C) practice as well as those of *Transformative learning through aesthetic experience* (TLTAE) method as described at the theoretical part of this paper.

5. Conclusion

The implementation of an art-based intervention may contribute to raising self and social awareness, enrich preschool children perceptions towards issues of friendship and difference, improve the way children feel about themselves and the others, promote positive socialization attitudes with peers. Provided that certain methodological conditions are met, art could be used to further support the learning processes by combining both cognitive and affective dimensions and by reinforcing children to engage in critical and empathetic negotiation of significant issues.

The results of this art-based intervention are encouraging. Systematic use of art through early years' education can be a basic component for teaching topics of social and emotional interest. Although we can't talk about transformative learning at this age, it is especially important for the learners to get familiarized with art and with a process of searching for deeper meanings.

As long term results we can mention triggering a critical mode of thinking, raising empathy as well as social and emotional well-being.

With this study we wanted to contribute to the employment of innovative methods and practices which promote new approaches to the education of preschool children and which enhance the development of creative, critical and empathetic learning. We suggest further integration and empirical investigation of art and art-related methods in early years' educational contexts in order to examine long term results for children and to identify mechanisms of change.

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