

Professionals Seeking Children's Perspectives (2014-2015) Persille Schwartz and Laura Detlefsen, Danish Evaluation Institute, Denmark and Alison Clark¹, The Open University, UK

Summary paper

The study

This one year study has been the first detailed exploration of the possibilities and challenges faced by pedagogues (early childhood practitioners) interested in seeking children's perspectives by adapting the Mosaic approach (Clark and Moss, 2001/2011). The subject of the study arose as a reaction to the academic discussion of challenges related to researchers positioned as 'outsiders' entering daycare settings making attempts to understand nuances of children's experiences. On one hand the unfamiliar view gives room for new understandings of the children's perspectives. On the other hand important insights might not be available to the researcher due to being unfamiliar with the children and not being a part of the natural everyday life in the kindergarten. This gave rise to a curiosity that turned into the research questions: What could be achieved from pedagogues working systematically with seeking children's perspectives in their kindergarten setting? Which challenges and opportunities would the pedagogues experience seeking children's perspectives? And would the work affect the pedagogues understanding of the children and the kindergarten setting?

The study was carried out in a Danish daycare context, and the cross-cultural nature of the study having two different nationalities collaborating and exploring how the Mosaic approach may contribute in another national context is also unique. The study has been developed by a project team from the Danish Evaluation Institute, in collaboration with Alison Clark, one of the authors of the Mosaic approach. During the study, this multi-method approach to seeking children's perspectives has been adapted to a Danish context by engaging with a group of ten pedagogues, of which nine were female, working in five kindergartens in Denmark over a nine month period. The pedagogues engaged in the project were recruited by advertising at EVA's homepage and in EVA's annual research magazine Bakspejlet. Prior to engaging in the project managers were interviewed in order to assure that they understood and agreed to the project design and that they kindergarten staff was familiar to working with children's perspectives e.g. in relation to the Daycare Act's demand of including children in evaluation of their physical, psychological and aesthetical environment.

The project ended up having participation from two pedagogues from each of the five kindergartens. Six pedagogues were working with special focus on fourteen children aged 3-5, and four pedagogues had special focus on working with seven children aged 1,8 – 2.10, but more children were included as peers to the focus children, and as peer-led professional development was integral to the study, more focus children were included as the ten central pedagogues communicated the approach to their colleagues. The five settings include rural, suburban and city centre locations.

The study draws upon the theoretical impetus underlying the Mosaic approach, the development of which has been part of a continued discourse about young children's perspectives drawing on children's rights and framed as 'listening to children' together with sociocultural and socialconstructionist theories about learning and meaning making. The view of the child embedded in the Mosaic approach can be summarized as:

¹ Alison is now a Visiting Research Associate at Thomas Coram Research unit, UCL Institute of Education, London

- Young children as 'experts in their own lives'
- Young children as skillful communicators
- Young children as active participant
- Young children as meaning makers, researchers and explorers (see Clark and Moss, 2005; 2011 p.4-12)

The emphasis here is on approaching encounters with children not as opportunities to extract the 'truth' but as opportunities for co-construction of meaning.

The design of the study is inspired by Michael Quinn Patton's thoughts on utilization-focused and developmental evaluation (1994; 2008; 2011a; 2011b). Patton believes that the value of an evaluation should be judged by whether it results in "Intended use by Intended users". As a consequence of this it is necessary to incorporate thoughts of utilization for the intended users in all aspects of the design and completion of the evaluation. The focus is on contributing to the development or adaptation of initiatives – here professionals working with the Mosaic approach in a Danish daycare setting.

A further dimension is the necessity to work closely together with the intended users who in this project are the pedagogues and their line-managers. In this study it has meant that the pedagogues and their managers have played a crucial role in shaping how the data of the study has been collected and analysed both at an individual and project level. The involvement of colleagues in the projects established in each of the participating kindergartens has been shaped by the pedagogues and their managers to suit the most familiar training models within each particular kindergarten. Finally the pedagogues and their managers have also been involved in developing written materials about the project and an app for supporting pedagogues in other Danish daycare institutions in systematically seeking children's perspectives based on the Mosaic approach.

Project activities and data collection

The study has included a series of seminars on working with children's perspectives interspersed with project visits to the kindergartens by the project team together with online meetings and support.

The first seminar was held in Copenhagen in April 2014 and was one of three face to face meetings of the whole project team and central pedagogues. This first two-day seminar introduced the participants to the Mosaic approach and to enable time for reflection about the underlying principles behind listening to children's perspectives, including ethical considerations. The presentations about the Mosaic approach were in English, followed by group work in Danish. Participants had a short article about the Mosaic Approach in Danish and a guide to basic-terminology related to the Mosaic approach and Early Childhood Education and care (ECEC) in a Danish-English-Danish translation. Three consultants from EVA also supported their understanding and translating. The participants also brought a personal narrative of a situation they'd experienced successful in relation to seeking children's perspectives in their local daycare setting.

Following the seminar the participants requested literature and were handed a book about the Mosaic approach. Between the first and second seminars data was collected in the following forms: pedagogues twice sent postcards of key moments, of dilemmas and of other important findings; virtual meetings were held between EVA team members and pedagogues together with individual telephone meetings between EVA team members and pedagogues in between virtual meetings. These exchanges were discussed in virtual meetings between EVA staff and Alison.

The second seminar was held on the Danish island of Bornholm in June 2014, where two of the kindergartens were situated. Pedagogues explained how they had begun to adapt the Mosaic approach to listen to the perspectives of particular children within their groups.

Further discussion focused on the practical and ethical issues arising from the study. Pedagogues discussed how to address their findings with individual children as well as the implications for wider groups of children. Since the project included peer-led learning in which the pedagogues during the following months were to introduce their colleagues to working with the Mosaic approach, strategies for doing this was also addressed in the discussion at the seminar.

The seminar was followed by fieldwork visits to the kindergartens and included interviews with managers and the two pedagogues in each kindergarten. Alison participated in the first two visits in the Copenhagen region followed by the EVA team members doing similar fieldwork visits to the rest of the kindergartens in the project.

Between the second and the third seminar the EVA team members and the pedagogues held virtual meetings, followed by a newsletter and a help-line for pedagogues for support and queries run by the EVA team. A virtual meeting was held with Alison to discuss methodological, practical and ethical issues. EVA team members also revisited the five kindergartens and carried out a further individual interview with each of the ten central pedagogues which included the pedagogues watching and reflection on a video recording of their initial understanding of children's perspectives.

The third and final face to face seminar took place at the Danish Evaluation Institute in Copenhagen, November 2014, bringing together each of the pedagogues and the project team for a one day workshop to reflect on the process of working with children's perspectives and the possibilities raised and challenges encountered both in relation to working with the children and in relation to introducing colleagues to working with children's perspectives.

The analysis process

The interviews and the group discussions from the second and third seminar have been transcribed and analysed along with the postcards and notes from the telephone meetings and internet based meetings. All statements from the interviews have been double blind coded by the EVA-team throughout the project process. The statements were divided into groups relating to understandings of the term children's perspectives, experiences applying the Mosaic approach (challenges, possibilities, inventions), Staff's experienced outcome, Staff's experiences of children's outcome, Institutional outcome, knowledge sharing among staff, suggestions for improvements and findings related to the project design. The analysis has been compared to the artefacts brought in by the pedagogues and the observations during the field visits, and the findings were analysed at internet meetings with the EVA-team and Alison. During the last seminar the analysis was shared with the pedagogues for comment and additions, and finally the EVA-team in consultation with Alison completed the study.

Ethics

The study has involved intense discussions about ethical issues arising from listening to children's perspectives. Particular attention has been paid to the process of selecting and inviting children to participate, the use of methods adapted to the children's preferred way of expressing themselves and to the ownership and audience for images produced by the children during the process. Insights from the children have been central to these discussions. This began with the selection of focus children to be invited to take part in the study. Pedagogues chose children that were the least visible to the adult, and the choice was carefully considered in reflecting on how the child's engagement might affect the actual child's everyday life and relation to their peers. Parents have been introduced to the project aims, and have given consent to the participation of their children. Equally the children have had the opportunity to decline or accept the invitation to participate in the

project – initially and on an on-going basis. During the process pedagogues have paid much attention to adapting the data-collection to ways that made sense and seemed comfortable to the child.

At one stage, for example, a pedagogue experienced that a participating girl would rather play with the other children than tell the pedagogue about her photos of her favorite places to play at the playground. The pedagogue postponed the review process, but the next time the pedagogue asked the girl if she would like to participate she still declined. However when the pedagogue gathered a large group of children seeking their perspectives on pictures taken by several children of the playground the girl asked if she could join in. This led to discussions among the pedagogues about on the one hand to respect a no from the child, but at the same time keep reinviting the child to share their perspectives in different ways according to the child's preferred ways to express itself – in this case the child being highly motivated by working together with other children.

Other ethical considerations have been related to the children's artefacts. The pedagogues have shown concern about the use of the children's artefacts internally as well as externally. Consent has been obtained from the parents of the child, and as far as possible from the child concerned. Sharing of the artefacts was important to give the participating pedagogues and project team opportunities to explore and challenge the understandings of the children's perspectives and to reflect on possible ways for the pedagogues to engage in seeking children's perspectives. For example the previously mentioned example of the boy's reaction to his map being removed provoked reflection between the pedagogue and the project team and subsequently with the wide group of pedagogues to consider what did this child's surprising reaction teach us about the process of listening to children in this way? One set of reflections related to the particular attachment children might feel to artefacts made about and with themselves: 'Will you include me in deciding when it's time to move on?' ; 'Will I as someone who belongs here keep a say in kindergarten?' and 'Do I have a say about what happens to the things that are made about me?' These ethical discussions drew attention to how to continue the children's experiences of this early democratic understanding of rights, through for example considering 'Will you include me in the planning of our project?'

Finally the pedagogues had ethical reflections on the consequences of their work seeking children's perspectives – at child, group and institutional level: when for example to include children and when to leave them undisturbed, how to be aware whether the children understood the project and the elements in it – and how to invite and perceive children's responses at all stages from data collection and analysis to the changes new insights led to.

The ethical discussions resulted in formulating a list of ethical questions for the pedagogues to revisit during the process and some basic ethical guidelines were formulated by the end of the project as:

ETHICAL GUIDELINES

I need to:

- **Stay curious to what the child expresses**
The whole point in seeking children's perspectives is to remember, that children will probably draw attention to something other, than what I would pay attention to as important.
- **Keep exploring**
The insights I'm offered are like a snapshot. The child reacts to a certain context and has many facets, expressions and preferences, that I do not see - so I will never find a definitive truth about the child

- **Focus on resources**
The child's engagement will reveal competences in a given setting. I need to refrain from judging the child's abilities, but stay focused on creating environments and opportunities for the child to convey their perspectives.
- **Respect the child's confidentiality.**
I am invited into the child's world and it's my responsibility to care for the child and respect their privacy.
- **Stay ethically aware**
I step into an unpredictable process where the power balances between adult and child are unequal. I therefore need to consider ethics in every action I take.

Findings

The study has revealed a multi-layered response by children and pedagogues to responding to children's perspectives in new ways through the course of the project. The following themes have emerged and are interrelated rather than hierarchical.

Children expecting to be recognised

Pedagogues commented on how children had responded positively to sharing their perspectives. When children had the opportunity to express their views about what it was like to be in kindergarten there was a clear sense that children were keen to seize this opportunity and to keep asking for or even expecting such chances to be offered to them. E.g. in a kindergartens a pedagogue experienced children asking for the camara taking for granted that they were the ones to document when the kindergarten went on a tour, and in every kindergarten kindergarten the pedagogues have reported that the children whom have been the focus of the project afterwards keep seeking the pedagogue and maintain the strengthened relation.

Re-positioning

Instances of changes in the pedagogues understanding of a child's character and it's relations have been observed. Some of the children who originally appeared less visible to adults entered a new position in the kindergarten. This seems to be connected to the pedagogues repositioning themselves to learn about particular children's perspectives. For example through exploring particular children's perspectives a pedagogue went from interpreting a girl as having a possessive friendship with another girl to interpreting this as an affectionate relationship with mutual benefits for both of the children. In another kindergarten a pedagogue was worried about a boy who seemed lonely and somewhat set apart from the other children, but having worked thoroughly with the boy's perspective on everyday life in the kindergarten, he appeared to have several friends, but sometimes he just enjoyed spending time by himself concentrating on his personal interests (such as being so fascinated by bugs that he'd concentrate on finding bugs rather than playing with the other children at the playground)

Developing agency

Some children have reacted to being the center of attention by showing more agency in the kindergarten setting at a general level. This is illustrated by a girl in one of the kindergartens who at the start of the project didn't speak in public. When she began working with her pedagogue, around what was important to her in the kindergarten, she whispered her responses when interviewed, and drew tiny lines around the edge of the paper when asked to draw her responses. Through the project the rest of her peers in her group were included taking as a starting point the photos and drawings the girl had produced with the pedagogue during their initial process. By the end of the project, lasting approximately two

months, the pedagogue was very surprised by the girl climbing the highest tower in the playground yelling out "Everybody, look at me", thus expressing a new agency in positioning herself as one who should be heard and seen by all children and adults in the kindergarten.

Displayed artefacts as symbols of belonging

In another kindergarten a boy demonstrated his agency in reacting to the During the project his photos had been placed on the floor and been used by the boy as a personal spot, a safe space in the bigger group room. Now he was puzzled by the pedagogue removing the artefacts they'd produced during the project, and asked the pedagogue "Am I not smart any longer? Don't you like me anymore?" Apparently the artefacts and the attention of the adult played an important role in his understanding of himself as being smart and liked. . The pedagogue expressed a genuine respect for and interest in the child's perspective by inviting him into a process of finding together a new meaningful location for his artefacts. Initially he suggested having the photos on the kitchen floor, which the pedagogue declined due to hygienic and practical reasons. He then suggested the photos were placed on the floor next to where he would have his everyday nap. This new location was agreed upon and took into account the emotional attachment he had expressed. The 'safe' space had been transferred but could continue and most importantly the boy had been reassured in his understanding of his perspectives as being important and valued by the pedagogue. This emphasizes the ethical dimension to working with displaying artefacts this way – to be mindful of the influence of these objects on children beyond the point when adults are ready for a change and an awareness of including children in deciding when to end a project and how to integrate the findings into everyday life. Children's responses to the project will be explored further in a paper to be presented at the European Early Childhood Education Research Association Conference 2015.

Pedagogical improvisation.

The pedagogues engaged in the project had previously been working with seeking children's perspectives. It appeared that most of the pedagogues were typically only familiar with one or two methods for gathering data about the children, often being observation and child interviews. To most of them the process of gathering and analyzing data together with children was a completely new experience. Being thus a little uncertain about how to engage in various methods for datacollection with children and also wanting to do things "the right way" (as the pedagogues expressed it in the final interviews), they initially stay rather strictly to the suggestions of how to engage with the Mosaic approach. After working with the approach over some months though the pedagogues realized there was the flexibility to use their professional skills and develop their own methods for seeking children's perspectives tailored to the children's different wishes for participation and ways of expressing themselves.

This opportunity for pedagogical improvisation, was seen as developing new 'dances' with children combining the professional explicit and implicit skills, contextual knowledge, ethical awareness with the understanding and perception of the child adjusted by the child's reaction to the invitation to convey its perspective by different means. The practical aspects of this pedagogical improvisation included examples where pedagogues, taking on board children's perspectives in a particular encounter, responded by improvising a new direction, initially unintended by the adult. For instance a pedagogue observed a child's movement around the playground by marking his tracks with footprints on a map. When the child saw the map he found that it looked like a treasure map, and the child and the pedagogue followed by more children engaged in a new data collection looking for treasures (being the child's favorite spots) along the route of the map, giving the pedagogue a chance to learn more from the children and the actual child's experiences of the places he'd spent time at previously. In another kindergarten pedagogues experienced that some children didn't want to have adult company while taking photos or drawing. The pedagogues rethought and changed their minds about what to do next. One let the child go on a photo tour on her

own. Another adult invented a floating map on the board on which children could add the drawings of important experiences in the playground whenever they wanted during the day.

Sometimes the pedagogues in the study struggled with this type of pedagogical improvisation. When they did, they profited from the opportunity to get support from the other participants of the project and understanding that exploring ways of interacting with the children was the actual aim of the project, and as long as ethical considerations were at the front of their mind the situation of occasionally not succeeding in their investigations was part of working in an unpredictable utilization-focused project design.

By the end of the project all the pedagogues had increased their repertoire of methodological tools. Inspired by the children and the experiences they shared with each other at the virtual meetings and at the second seminar they ended up using various other methods as e.g. drama, role play, guided tours, children's photos, videorecordings, observation of children's reaction to videorecordings, parental registrations of children's whereabouts and activities when being picked up in the afternoon and a lot of other elements that could be fitted into everyday life in the kindergarten as for instance focused interviews in a natural setting as around lunch.

Curiosity and open endings

Inspired by anthropological research an analytical approach was adopted from the start of the study to support pedagogues to consider children's experiences of places, things, activities and relationships. This has included exploring particular times of day in kindergarten, specific routines such as lunchtime preparation and cloakroom and outdoor spaces. This analytical approach, once understood helped pedagogues to focus on the expression of the child in relation to context rather than a truth about the child and its abilities in general. Yet, many of the pedagogues initially entered the process with an understanding that seeking children's perspectives should lead to a result revealing the 'truth' about the child. During the project this understanding was challenged by the EVA-team and discussed among the pedagogues, EVA and Alison during the seminars.

Most of the participating pedagogues changed their understanding of the outcome of their work with children's perspectives to providing understandings and insights for adults rather than revealing a fixed 'truth'; but these insights and understandings were to be continuously explored with children as experts on their everyday lives in kindergarten. By the end of the project a pedagogue expressed children as experts by arguing that staff need to learn from children since "These children have so much kindergarten experience!". Pedagogues described this ongoing learning as "a never ending process" Their interpretation of working with children's perspectives was expressed as a way of relating to children in everyday life at kindergarten in order to achieve better understanding and find better solutions. In addition most of the pedagogues expressed that they struggled to get their colleagues and managers to understand that the aim of the project wasn't to find a truth about children's skills or actions, but to engage in an understanding of their perception of life in kindergarten.

Democratic right as empathy driven

Also a different understanding of democracy in practice has emerged during the study that focuses on the importance of the child's experience rather than necessarily the child's 'vote'. Democratic values are embedded in Danish culture, as indicated for example in the Daycare Act (2007). There is also a long history of children having a value. This study has provided a means of learning new ways to think about children's perspectives and of how that might impact on life in kindergarten. Pedagogues have articulated this as moving from thinking about democratic practice focusing on giving children *choices* to a focus on understanding children's *experiences* as guidance to change and improve the kindergarten setting, and as such the adult insight and attention to the unsaid and implicit has given children influence beyond the frame of what they're able to formulate in verbal language.

Empathy has emerged as an essential attribute for working as a pedagogue in this way. Rather than assume what children experience at kindergarten the study has opened up questions about what it is like for children to be at kindergarten, and has challenged the pedagogues' assumptions in general. Built in to the Mosaic approach is the intention to listen to children's perspectives and to seek to understand more about how it feels to be a child in a particular place and as a result to connect with children in new ways. This can be understood as pedagogues and researchers exercising empathy. This may also lead to a different way of approaching the role of pedagogue, a movement from working based on adults' ideas of planning activities for the children to fit into to one that arises from being sensitive to children's experiences seen as feed back to the adult about the pros and cons of the way the pedagogues have arranged the kindergarten environment.

One such example included a refugee girl who had been bewildered by the kindergarten-group outings to the playground. Her pedagogue, working with the visual methods showed the girl images of children from the kindergarten group playing at the playground they were going to, documented the child's following visit to the playground and gave these photographs to the child immediately after the trip so she could share her experiences with her mother and father in her home language. The photographs appeared to reinforce her perspectives and provided a reassuring platform for further discussion. Next day the child was ready and happy to leave for the field trip, which the pedagogue meanwhile had decided to be a revisit to the same playground in order to reassure and comfort this child.

Home and kindergarten

Tuning into children's perspectives has brought into sharp relief the connections between home and kindergarten. This can be seen as a two way process from pedagogues to parents and the other way around. There have been examples in the study where young children have demonstrated how personal meanings are given to places, things activities and people because of an association with home. One example of this was a pre-verbal child (1,9 years) who took photos of what he liked in the cloakroom. Among other things the photos contained images of selected posters on the wall and a pair of adult boots which he always stopped by when entering the cloakroom. The pedagogue discovered when talking to the child's parent that these boots were exactly like the mother's boots and that the child had similar posters at home. Pedagogues also discussed a greater awareness of how parents could offer insights into their children's experiences of being in kindergarten. These conversations could contribute to a more detailed 'mosaic' of a particular child's world as well as provide a platform for a new way of collaboration with parents engaging in the exploration of their child's perspectives.

Learning from seeking the youngest children's perspectives

During the planning stages of this study it was decided to include pedagogues working with children under three. This has provided a rich seam of material. As illustrated in this summary paper, many of the most challenging and illuminating questions have arisen from considering the perspectives of the youngest children in kindergarten. Central to this has been a new openness to tune into children's different modes of expression. Pedagogues in this study have described becoming more aware of children's other forms of communication and have thereby gained new insights that would have remained hidden if only relying on verbal forms of communication. Two pedagogues from two different kindergartens working with the youngest children described how the children who had not yet learned to walk were placed in a sandpit as a regular routine when being outdoor. However, they became aware that these children almost always crawled away. The adults are now more conscious about using a larger area of the playground and do not just place the children in the same location. These issues, such as considering children's engagement in planning beyond the life of the project, have not only been relevant for considering pedagogical practice with the youngest children but with older children as well.

Findings related to the project design

Learning from cross-cultural dialogue

It has been important to remain conscious of the demands of cross-cultural dialogue throughout this project. This has included language differences but also other dimensions. In terms of language, the introductory presentations about the Mosaic approach were in English. Subsequently the majority of workshop activities were in Danish with the Danish research team acting as language brokers between pedagogues and Alison. Special care was taken to discuss the translation of key terms in the Mosaic approach to check that the underlying intended meanings had been preserved.

Understanding the professional histories of early childhood practice in Denmark was a less obvious dimension to the cross-cultural dialogue in this study. It became important for example to discuss what attention was paid to observation and data collection and -analysis in early childhood professional training in Denmark. This led to wider debate about different prevalent forms of initial training and continuing professional development that may be needed in order to work systematically and professionally with seeking children's perspectives. For instance the ability to tune in and prompt children in an interview situation seem to be a subject to pay more attention to as well as ability to apply many different methods for gathering data with the children during special initiatives, and projects as well as everyday situations of kindergartens as focusing on children's experiences of everyday life while the group is eating, singing, walking on tours etc.

The creation of shared artefacts using drawing and model-making provided a focus for some of these complex cross-cultural conversations. During these sessions the concept of seeing engaging with children's perspectives as a journey of reflection through a series of 'islands'² emerged as an image of the structural support of the pedagogues data collection and process of analysis that was developed during the project in order to support the pedagogues in remembering to involve the children at all stages and ensure that their habits of when to involve children were challenged.

Disseminating new ideas

The peer-led learning proved to be a challenging and unfamiliar part of the process for many of the pedagogues. Much discussion took place in the seminars on this topic and this transfer of ideas was the focus of additional support between seminars. By the end of the project it became obvious that success in passing on the work and the understanding was closely related to the amount of interest and commitment by colleagues (depending partly on competing agendas for competence building) and the structural support by managers. The participating pedagogues found that explaining their key moments or AHA's³ gained from working with the Mosaic approach were highly motivating for their colleagues' interest and commitment. One such moment for example was the sharing of a child's photo that looked like a photo of a lawn, but actually was a photo of the pedagogue – "she'd just left" as the child explained. In general the pedagogues found it was very fruitful to create a framework for their colleagues to make their own AHA's as part of becoming familiar with working with the Mosaic approach. One example here was a pedagogue who asked her colleagues to take photos of what was important to them in their work followed by a dialogue among colleagues. This led to several AHA's among the colleagues about how vulnerable it can be to show and tell others about what's important to oneself and therefore how important it is to include ethical considerations in everything you do as a professional seeking children's perspectives. In other words ethical considerations became very present through trying on the methods among the pedagogues.

² The Focus Island, The Data collection Island, The Island of Change and finally the Island of reflection and evaluation

³ insight in their preunderstandings of the child appearing to be wrong when confronted with the data the children conveyed

The kindergartens applied different strategies for communicating the knowledge about seeking children's perspectives from the 10 participating pedagogues to the rest of their colleagues. They all chose different strategies for knowledge sharing; starting from either theory or by peer-learning, and from a one-to-one level, over one to group level or one-to-institutional level. This raises wider questions about the shaping of new knowledge in early childhood institutions and how ideas are communicated within and beyond kindergartens to parents, other professionals and politicians. The peer-led learning element of this study is one example of allowing time for new ideas to be considered, adapted and supported at a local level. This is in contrast to 'parachuting in' a solution where culture and context run the risk of being ignored.

In general it appeared that working with children's perspectives was regarded as a core element of pedagogical work and was considered easily related to already existing initiatives in the kindergartens. Yet the actual competence building seemed to depend to a great extent on managerial support, not only of the idea, but also in making actual structures supporting and allowing the pedagogues to engage in the work. In several of the kindergartens they succeeded in implementing the knowledge on working with children's perspectives at group or even at institutional level.

Conclusion

This cross-cultural study has revealed new understandings about the possibilities of seeking children's perspectives, for pedagogues working with young children.

The study has drawn attention to the importance of and possibilities in including children under three years old in this process as well as older children. There were several examples of children, including the youngest children expressing pleasure in having a say and a new understanding that they had status within a setting. The display of photographs, drawings and maps made as part of the visual, participatory tools in the Mosaic approach appeared to add to the children's sense of being valued. Opportunities have been observed for some of the least 'visible' young children to reposition themselves within a group and for pedagogues to reposition themselves in relation to understandings about day to day life in the kindergarten.

A strong emphasis has emerged about the key role of ethics in engaging with these issues. The study supports the need to allow time for children and pedagogues to explore perspectives together in an ethical way. This includes several layers of engagement. The process begins with a sensitive systematic exploration with a child, tuning into different modes of communication and expression. Further layers include opening up discussion with wider groups of children. This dialogue requires time and a continuously awareness from the pedagogue that findings are uncertain and in flux, demanding the adult to keep the investigation alive and open ended. Otherwise single elements of the Mosaic approach, could risk being used as a 'quick fix' for adults who are curious about children's experiences to determine and make decisions on a superficial level. In that case there is a risk of reducing children's perspectives to an interesting photo from a child – and if so children's perspectives stay as a feature or activity rather than becoming a basic value in the everyday practice of the kindergarten. In relation to this pedagogues have experienced a change in their thinking about children's perspectives and democratic practice, from discussions with children around choice to thinking more broadly about what are children experiencing here?

Finally the study has opened up questions about how to facilitate the interpretation of ideas in a cross-cultural project. This has led to the creation of shared artefacts using arts-based techniques to facilitate dialogue across theoretical, methodological, professional and cultural boundaries. Adaptations have been made to the Mosaic approach in the course of the study. This has included articulating a focus on 'places, things, activities and relationships' in seeking new understandings of young children's day to day lives in kindergarten, and also a

new metaphorical language has been explored for explaining and highlighting the different stages in the process of gathering children's perspectives.

Next steps

The project has provided detailed examples of how ideas travelled and were shaped during the introduction of the Mosaic approach – at a national project level and at a local level. This may provide useful insights not only for developing supporting material for working in new ways with children's perspectives in Denmark, but also offer further insights into the professional development of pedagogues.

Two proposals have been accepted for presentation at the European Early Childhood Educational Research Association in September 2015. The first of these papers will explore ethical considerations arising from seeking children's perspectives by using visual, participatory methods. The second paper will focus on the role of the visual artefacts in supporting children's sense of belonging and sense of self.

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