

# “I get new ideas, it’s something new”

## A RECEPTION STUDY ON THE PRESCHOOL PROGRAMME

### ENE MENE BU

Andrea Holler

**A study involving 75 children aged between 3 and 6 years investigated what children get out of the join-in programme *ENE MENE BU* and how they understand the programme.**

Pia is collecting stones, stroking the surface of the objects she has found with her fingers (Ill. 1). As she does so, she says, “They have to be very smooth because then you can paint them better.” Then she gradually explains what she needs for her intended creative project today: “Water and colours, glitter, beads, feathers and glue.” After the preschooler has filled a glass with water, we follow her to a table in the garden where the craft tools have been set out. First, Pia paints using a paintbrush with slightly diluted pink-coloured poster paint (Ill. 2). Then she sticks several colourful butterflies that have been cut out of metal foil onto the stone. She decorates another stone with beads and a feather (Ill. 3). The documentation works almost exclusively with close-ups and detailed images. The camera is either on the face of the preschooler or on her hands and fingers painting with the paintbrush, applying the glue, sticking the different materials and accessories on, and cutting up a feather.

Pia is one of the “children in the centre” (Bult, 2007) of the join-in format *ENE MENE BU* (KiKA, Germany) presenting the children watching the programme various ideas and stimuli so that they can become creative themselves. The

10-minute programme shows not only children introducing their painting and craft preferences, but also pieces of art submitted by young viewers (“cardboard animals”). The programme consists of live-action footage and design elements composed of graphics and work the children have submitted. Drawing on insights from aesthetic education, *ENE MENE BU* was developed specifically for preschool children to demonstrate and strengthen their creative competences. Here, aesthetics is conceptualised as perception that has become conscious as sensory activity (Borg, 2012). Thus, education of sensory perception and creativity, focusing on experiences with all the senses is at the core of aesthetic education (Stamas, 2012). The child as actor develops his/her world within the relationships s/he enters into and by engaging with his/her environment. Aesthetic education encompasses sensory learning processes in all areas of life. It is not restricted to forms of art education. At the heart of every aesthetic process is, primarily, an aesthetic sensation (Borg, 2012). Processes of aesthetic learning can be stimulated by planned as well as unplanned (everyday) situations. These could be events (e.g. birthdays),

particular sensory or physical impressions (e.g. goose pimples), natural phenomena (e.g. shadows), everyday things and materials (e.g. container, foil, string), sounds or images (Uhlig, 2010). In terms of content, the programme focuses on the creativity and imagination of the protagonists. It shows how children become creative artistically and in terms of their craftsmanship, creating their own works of art, e.g. folding origami, sawing wood and building a house out of it, making a picture out of different mud markings, creating an arrangement with potted plants or a picture from iron-on beads. And all of this completely independently, without the intervention of adults or moderators.

The IZI, in cooperation with the preschool department of KiKA and as part of a reception study, investigated what the young target audience itself thinks of the programme.

### THE STUDY

A few weeks after the first broadcast, 75 children in Germany aged between 3 and 6 years<sup>2</sup> watched 3 different episodes of the 10-minute programme *ENE*



Ill. 1-3: *ENE MENE BU* shows how children become creative: Pia collects stones, paints them and sticks decorations on them

MENE BU which had been put together specifically for the collaborative study. The aim was also to compare individual variants of parts of the programme in an experimental setting. After watching the programme the kindergarten children were asked in individual interviews about the programme in general, individual contributions, and how motivated they were to create something (copy ideas from the programme). Age-appropriate picture cards made it possible to gain an insight into what children get out of *ENE MENE BU* and how they understand the programme. All reception situations were video recorded. Using the screen-in-screen technique, the programme watched by the children was inserted into the video recording and evaluated according to the children's attention and interaction in relation to what they were watching.

## RESULTS

### *An inspirational programme for children featuring children*

The programme is well received by the children in the study. They clearly enjoy watching the programme and they rate it very highly in the interviews. 4 out of 5 preschool children describe the programme as "super". In particular, the boys and girls in the study emphasise that many different children appear and that they are in the centre of the programme. 7-year-old Laura, for example, rates the programme highly "because there were always new children coming on, and they were doing handicrafts". The preschool children questioned also like the fact that various attractive stimuli are presented: "Because there were ideas for doing things (...). You can take the ideas from it; that's something new, something to think about. I could give that to my brother for his birthday." (Vanessa, 7 years) The kindergarten children also enjoy gaining knowledge: "I liked it (...) because you can learn something from it, and see how it works, too", describes

6-year-old Frederico. Another 6-year-old thinks it was good "that you learned something for school, for doing handicrafts." And Elvira (7 years) particularly likes "the idea with the potted plant" by a boy in the programme "because he thought it up himself and I have never heard of anything like it before and it's a great idea."

### *Competent, creative and age-appropriate*

The 3- to 6-year-olds in the study emphasise that the children on television did whatever they were doing very competently. In the interviews there are various appreciative comments on the actions and abilities of the protagonists, e.g. from a 5-year-old: "The [girls] explained it well. Those 2 should keep doing it." The young viewers like the fact that "the children could do everything so quickly" (Vincent, 5 years) and that "they always painted so nicely" (Paul, 7 years). In terms of content, "being creative" is also key for the children: statements such as "because there were a lot of things to make" (Mara, 6 years) or "because you can do folding there" (Luis, 6 years) are given as reasons why they really liked the programme. Aesthetic experiences and impressions fascinate the preschoolers, too. For instance, Max (4 years) and Natascha (5 years) particularly like the cardboard animals (Ill. 4) the other children made "because they were painted so nicely" and "because they were so colourful, with lots of colours". Two thirds of the kindergarten children think the programme is age-appropriate. A quarter, though, thinks the primary target group is somewhat older, primarily exemplified by the level of difficulty of the craft activities presented, the age of the protagonists and their competences within the individual contribu-



Ill. 4: Appreciating the children's creativity: the "cardboard animals" submitted by the viewers are embedded in the design of the programme

tions: "Because they can really show everything they've learned, because they are already at school." (Hendrik, 6 years) 5-year-old Lina can imagine that the programme is geared more towards children who are a little older "because it's something the little ones don't quite understand; folding a lion like that is hard".

### *Motivating children to copy the projects and join in*

Asked whether they would like to copy a creative project they have seen on television, 60% of the children refer to an element from the programme that they would like to copy. This, however, highlights an age difference. The older the children are, the more likely they are to pick up concrete ideas from the programme. Almost all the children would themselves also like to be a protagonist in the programme and demonstrate something in the programme. 4 out of 10 children pick up things from the programme, such as "making a cardboard animal". Just under half the children would like to demonstrate their own idea and have their own creative suggestions that they could demonstrate to other children, e.g. folding a paper plane, building a remote control car, making a collage, drawing animals, doing a somersault or presenting different ideas for games.

### *Children like to watch creative children*

The evaluation of the reception recordings in the screen-in-screen



© IZI

Ill. 5: Children watching *ENE MENE BU*: the preschoolers intently follow other children doing handicrafts and drawings



© IZI

Ill. 6: "That looks cool!" – The viewers enjoy the aesthetics of the handicrafts created by children in the programme

version makes clear that the children enjoy observing other children doing creative activities. Rapt, and sometimes open-mouthed, girls and boys follow, for example, how Robert folds a devil (Ill. 5), Hannah draws a life-sized picture of herself, and Pia paints stones and sticks things on them.

Some children also comment on what is happening, and the materials and colours being used. Others guess what is being made and make associations, for example, during the documentation showing Pia painting and sticking things onto stones: "I know what they're making; I bet it's a stone American Indian", or "I know what that is: a meadow with butterflies on it!"

The stones' manifold design possibilities and the viewers' involvement in the action of painting and sticking – which is very appealing to children – become a free space for the imagination (Neuß, 2003) and creative mental activity.

The girls as well as the boys take pleasure in discovering new ideas, such as that feathers can be stuck onto stones, and they enjoy this aesthetic enrichment.

A group of children (Ill. 6) comments, for instance, at the end of the contribution: "That looks cool!" A boy laments: "Shame we don't do anything like that at kindergarten."

**Children's art as pedagogical value added**

*ENE MENE BU* gives children the space in which they can create their own art, observe it and experience it. The viewers are also invited to paint or make something for the programme, thereby helping to shape the schedule by sending in their creations. The programme provides online cut-out sheets for cardboard animals for the children at home. These animals are made by printing

out the respective model, sticking it onto cardboard, painting it individually or designing it in another way, cutting it out and slotting it together. The cardboard animals that are submitted and selected are then embedded in the design of the programme or presented in a gallery.

One of the questions of interest within the context of the study was: Can a suitable commentary on the children's artworks in the gallery contribute to aesthetic education? In cooperation with the preschool department of KiKA the IZI created 3 quasi-experimental types of commentary with the aim of comparing these: (1) A relatively "quiet" variant with rather few comments on the children's artworks, (2) comments on the gallery with an appraisal of and information on the design techniques of the cardboard animals submitted, and (3) comments in dialogue form containing ideas for possible activities involving the cardboard animals.

The children's statements in the interviews showed that the children absorb the specific comments about the gallery, and also that variant 2 offers the strongest focus on the appraisal of the cardboard animals and their aesthetic design. Some children therefore answer the question of how they would design a cardboard animal not only by mentioning colours and patterns but also by referring to the technique and effect of the design. One 5-year-old suggests "drawing with felt-tip pens" "because then the colour is strong". Furthermore, she would "add glittery things". Another girl suggests painting the cardboard animal with dark colours; a boy aged 4 years has the following design idea: "If you paint it more colourfully: colourful stripes, blended afterwards, it looks cooler. You can paint over it with water colour pencils."

In variously devised "cardboard animal requests" during the programme the children are asked to make and submit cardboard animals and handicraft pieces. There is, for instance, a variant in which children can be watched making an animal step by step (Ill. 7).

A second variant is structured interactively: parts of different cardboard animals can be seen. They do not all belong to one cardboard animal, but a complete animal can be built from all of them. Children's hands try slotting the pieces together. One child's voice asks, "Does that match?" If a suitable or unsuitable part is tried out for the cardboard animal, this is commented on respectively.



Ill. 7: The preschool programme *ENE MENE BU* is meant to stimulate children to copy the handicrafts and participate. Here: making cardboard animals

Screenshot from *ENE MENE BU* © KiKA, Germany



Ill. 8: Very appealing to children: the individual parts of an animal are described by a child; in the animation the cardboard animal is assembled from these

In further variants a child is accompanied to the zoo. On arrival at an animal, e.g. the lion, the child comments on the animal that results from the individual parts (head, legs, mane, etc.) of the respective cardboard animal (Ill. 8). While this is happening, the corresponding cardboard animal parts are laid onto the body parts that are mentioned. This is how the cardboard animal is developed; the viewers at home are invited to make it, design it, and submit it. These requests are received very well by the children, and some of them also say they are their favourite part of the programme, above all the variant with the real lions in the zoo.

The practical value of this for the children lies, on the one hand, in the extremely appealing topic “animals and zoo” itself, but also, as the reception observation shows, in the interaction with the programme. The children enjoy communicating their knowledge of animals and their individual body parts. Most children do not understand, however, that they themselves can send in cardboard animals, nor do they understand what they have to do if they want to see their animals on television. The children’s lacking understanding on how to join in at the time of the study, could be used as a chance to modify the requests and make them more comprehensible for the preschoolers by, for example, demonstrating individual steps such as the way to the postbox, or particular details.

a little more so than the boys.

## CONCLUSION

Traditionally in crafts and join-in programmes for preschoolers a space is created in which an explanation is given of how something works. Children, however, need space in which they can discover something themselves and become active and creative. The programme *ENE MENE BU* does this in an original way, and preschoolers can realise their creative ideas without the intervention of adults. Thus, pieces of art are created within the programme, and this stimulates the creativity of the viewers. Adults and programme makers often think that, particularly with younger children, everything must be explained in precise detail, and they must be told how the world works and how to make something. Yet if we observe how children really appropriate the world, then we see that they are active, making, doing and developing their very own creative forms. The *ENE MENE BU* programme incorporates this. It not only presents children, but puts them with their ideas on how to create something themselves in the centre, allowing them to be exactly as they are. They are given the opportunity to explain and demonstrate something, namely their own art projects. For children this is very appealing and stimulating, and it works well in terms of their reception: children want to see children, and

The question of whether the children would like to make their own creative contribution to the programme is almost superfluous: almost all the children in the study, virtually independent of their age, would like to design and assemble a cardboard animal themselves, the girls

they enjoy doing something freely and creatively without parents or adults intervening and explaining what they are actually doing – or should actually do. In the individual contributions children show in their own way that they can be effective, make their mark, communicate their world, and make themselves visible to others. And that can also stimulate the viewers at home to become active and creative themselves. This is wholly in accordance with the motto: “*ENE MENE BU – and now over to you!*”

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> ENE MENE BU was awarded the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2012 in the category “Up to 6 Non-Fiction”

<sup>2</sup> 34 girls and 41 boys from 7 kindergartens in Munich, Erfurt, Weimar and Lauingen took part in the study. All the children’s names have been changed. Survey period: November 2011

## REFERENCES

Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Arbeit und Sozialordnung, Familie und Frauen (Stamas) – Staatsinstitut für Frühpädagogik (ed.) (2012). Der Bayerische Bildungs- und Erziehungsplan für Kinder in Tageseinrichtungen bis zur Einschulung. Berlin: Cornelsen.

Borg, Kathrin (2012). Ästhetische Bildung. Osnabrück: Niedersächsisches Institut für frühkindliche Bildung und Entwicklung.

Bult, Jan-Willem (2007). Children in the centre. A conversation with Jan-Willem Bult. *TeleviZion*, 20(E), 10-11.

Neuß, Norbert (2003). Gaps for fantasy in children’s films – Television and the aesthetic of reception. *TeleviZion*, 16(1), 22-27.

Schäfer, Gerd (2001). Prozesse frühkindlicher Bildung. Available at: [https://www.hf.uni-koeln.de/data/eso/File/Schaefer/Prozesse\\_Fruehkindlicher\\_Bildung\\_Duplex.pdf](https://www.hf.uni-koeln.de/data/eso/File/Schaefer/Prozesse_Fruehkindlicher_Bildung_Duplex.pdf) [01.08.14]

Uhlig, Bettina (2010). Prozesse ästhetischen Lernens. In Ludwig Duncker et al. (eds.), *Bildung in der Kindheit. Das Handbuch zum Lernen für Kindergarten und Grundschule* (S. 132-135). Seelze: Kallmeyr/Klett.

## THE AUTHOR

Andrea Holler, M.A. Media Education, Psychology and Sociology is Scientific Editor at the IZI, Munich, Germany.

