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Transforming images: A collaborative art exercise to debunk biases

ABSTRACT

In the Netherlands, art academies offering teacher training courses in visual arts and design pay little attention to diverse learners, such as pupils with learning disabilities, in their curricula. To form a picture of the existing perceptions of students concerning persons with intellectual and/or psychological disabilities, this study was set up to map the views of a group of first-year teacher training students of visual arts and design at the Amsterdam University of the Arts. The focus of the study was to see whether student perceptions changed after an active encounter with persons with intellectual and/or psychological disabilities – in this case, a group of visiting artists with learning disabilities. The motivation for this study was influenced by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As this mandate was adopted in the Netherlands in 2017, we have been intrigued by the consequences it would have for current educational settings and teacher training courses focusing on the subjects of art and design.

KEYWORDS

art teacher training
image
biases
learning disabilities
diverse learners
inclusive art education

Binnen de reguliere docentenopleidingen in Nederland bestaat nauwelijks aandacht voor anders lerenden, zoals leerlingen met leerbeperkingen. Dit geldt ook voor de docentenopleidingen beeldende kunst en vormgeving. Dit is een gemiste kans omdat kunsteducatie vaak meer ruimte en mogelijkheden biedt in het opdoen

van kennis en ervaringen voor anders lerenden, in tegenstelling tot verschillende vakken waar die toegankelijkheid moeilijker is. Kunsteducatie kan bijvoorbeeld een bijdrage leveren aan de verbinding tussen leerlingen met en zonder een beperking, waarbij de mogelijkheid ontstaat van elkaar te leren.

Door het tekenen van het VN verdrag dat de rechten van mensen met een beperking waarborgt, verplicht Nederland zich tot algemeen onderwijs dat inclusief van aard is. Dit heeft consequenties voor het gehele onderwijssysteem, zoals bijvoorbeeld de curricula van de docentenopleidingen. Het doel van dit onderzoek is het bestaande beeld van een aantal studenten over personen met een verstandelijke en of psychische beperking in beeld te brengen, en hoe het beeld ten aanzien van deze personen verandert na een actieve kennismaking tussen deze studenten en kunstenaars met deze beperkingen. Tevens is onderzocht wat zij leren van deze ontmoeting. De eerstejaarsstudenten zijn afkomstig van de Docentenopleiding beeldende kunst en vormgeving van de Breitneracademie, Amsterdamse Hogeschool voor de Kunsten, en de kunstenaars met een verstandelijke en of psychische beperking van het Outsider Art Atelier in Amsterdam.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) came into existence in the Netherlands on 14 July 2016. By signing the treaty, the Netherlands commits itself to providing for people with a disability of any kind full participate in society and ensuring their rights to an inclusive education. Children and adults with disabilities are still being confronted with different forms of social isolation, for example in their homes, work and educational settings (Foundation of Inclusive Education 2004.). In order for change to occur in the current situation, it is crucial to alter situational factors like awareness, knowledge and realistic images concerning persons with any form of disability or impairment.

International studies show that art education has the ability to build bridges between groups through enhanced understanding and awareness using collaborative and inclusive forms of education (Bain and Hasio 2011; Mullaney 2017). If art is seen not only as a school subject, but also as a form of visual and other sensory intelligence, it offers pupils with learning disabilities alternative ways to connect with knowledge, others and the world (Mullaney 2017). Specialized art programmes not only enhance the artistic skills of pupils with learning disabilities but can also improve the social and communicative skills of pupils to help them better engage with their social surroundings including family, school and their peers (Lee et al. 2017).

A move towards inclusive forms of arts education will have a direct impact on the practice of art education and therefore also on the curricula of the art teacher training courses in the Netherlands. The participative possibilities of persons with disabilities in arts practice and art educational situations in the Netherlands were already studied in 2010 within a collaborative research project called 'Art Inclusive' (Van Biene et al. 2010). The study showed that there is a need for more art educational expertise to support artists and students with disabilities in a variety of artistic activities both at special education schools and in the extracurricular art practice settings for adults with disabilities. According to the study, in the more than 150 Dutch art studios – often connected to care organizations offering various forms of art practice – professional artistic support is often arbitrary. The support associated with

available artistic activities varies, as does the educational background of the teachers/coaches and the quality of the art produced. Support or lessons in artistic activities within the studios are provided by artists as well as art teachers, but also by activity supervisors or volunteers without a specific art educational background (Van Biene et al 2010).

The above-mentioned research publication (Van Biene et al. 2010) offers a variety of recommendations for art schools and art teacher training courses. For instance, it is suggested that art schools should enable more inclusive art teaching settings, train art teachers and reformulate the teacher training curricula to better address diversity and inclusivity. Also, the broadening of teaching skills in teacher training to include the recognition and anticipation of individual educational needs of all learners is recommended. If students are introduced to people/pupils with learning disabilities right from the beginning of their teacher training course, they will develop a more natural and open attitude towards all learners including learners with disabilities (Mullaney 2017; Van Biene et al. 2010).

Exploring the current state of affairs of the various existing programmes, we found out through an inventory that in the intervening years since the implementation of the CRPD, there have not been significant changes in the curricula of the teacher training courses associated with the academies of visual arts and design in the Netherlands towards curricula that serve a diversity of learners, like pupils with learning disabilities. This inventory of the six art academies in the Netherlands that offer teacher training programmes was carried out as a survey distributed by e-mail and telephone. Findings showed a fragmented picture regarding the attention and space given in the curriculum to art education for various learners. In most programmes, little or no attention is paid to art education for all learners in the curriculum, and a few academies offer only theoretical lessons in their programmes on various learning and behavioural problems. The inventory shows that the teacher trainees of visual arts and design are given limited training when it comes to adequately responding to the educational needs of persons with learning disabilities.

This is a missed opportunity and a flaw as art education has an impact on all learners on a much wider scale than the traditional school settings, spanning through life in various forms from pre-school, through different forms of schools, museums, community centres, homes, hospitals and higher educational settings (Derby 2012). Both art and art education also have the potential of critically addressing social and cultural issues concerning educational ethics and democratic language, dealing with inclusion and equal opportunities for all learners (Eisenhouer 2008; Keifer-Boyd et al. 2018).

There is a need for well-qualified art teachers even in the current special educational settings or extracurricular settings for adults with disabilities (Van Biene et al. 2010). Working with diverse learners would also be beneficial for the teacher training students in strengthening their pedagogical teaching strategies and methods (Mullaney 2017). Art education often offers alternative ways and opportunities for pupils with learning disabilities to gain knowledge and experiences. This is in contrast to other subjects where accessibility can be more difficult. For example, art education can contribute to a connection between pupils with and without a disability, working in collaborative settings with the possibility of learning with and from each other. If art education was viewed from a wider perspective concerning all learners, including all sensory experiences, it would require a reformulation towards a much more sensitive pedagogy (Penketh 2017).

THE STUDY

This case study started off with first-year students of the teacher training course in visual arts and design of the Amsterdam University of the Arts. Our aim was to reveal participants' existing views regarding persons with intellectual and/or psychological disabilities. Twenty first-year students of the teacher training course took part in this study, together with a group of artists working in the Outsider Art Studio in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The research questions were: Do the images and opinions of the students change regarding persons and in particular these visiting artists with intellectual and/or psychological disabilities after a collaborative art intervention? What did the students learn from this intervention about their own biases, inclusive forms of art and art education, themselves and cooperative ways of working in art practice?

Our study was conducted first in the form of a questionnaire and a semi-structured group interview prior to a lesson intervention. The students were not informed about the content of the intervention in advance with the purpose of receiving answers as objectively as possible. Additionally, the students completed a questionnaire prior to the group interview in order for the researchers to gain more personal information from each student.

In a subsequent intervention during a lesson, the students met a group of artists with disabilities. The artists were invited to the academy as guest lecturers to tell about their art practice and to participate in a collaborative artistic intervention together with the first-year students. These self-taught and self-supported artists did not receive any artistic training before practising art in a studio specializing in the support of learning disabilities. Even so, the visiting artists could be seen as experts: first, as experienced art makers with longer experiences in the art-making practice than the students. Second, their paramount expertise is about their own lives as artists with learning disabilities and supporting needs.

The visiting artists gave a lecture presenting their artistic works and ended with a collaborative art exercise in which the artists and the students worked together. For the collaborative art exercise, one of the visiting artists offered to conduct a singing bowl meditation, which was his specialty. In his view, it would be inspirational for the forming of colours and forms during the artistic exercise.

During the intervention, we observed and created video recordings of the students on site. The observation was conducted as an open observation to follow students' reactions through their facial expressions to the presentation. We were interested in whether or not changes were evident in their attitude or demeanour during the intervention and collaborative exercise. All students agreed on the terms of the study and completed a learner report after the lesson regarding their experiences with the encounter and artistic exercise. The learner reports were used as an evaluative tool to gain insights and information about the learning experiences of the students. This would otherwise be difficult to verify objectively (de Groot 1980; Jansen 2011). More detailed information was gained through semi-structured interviews of five voluntary students in the weeks following the intervention.

This particular lesson can be regarded as exceptional within the existing curriculum, as the inventory of the six Dutch art academies offering teacher training programmes showed that artists with disabilities are not or only rarely invited as guest lecturers to academies of arts and design. Also as art makers,

the presence of the visiting artists at the academy can be seen as an exception within the typical student programme.

STUDENT EXPERIENCES

The study showed that the participating students did have some prior knowledge and experience concerning persons with an intellectual and/or psychological disability. In particular, the questionnaire and interview prior to the planned intervention indicated that while the knowledge of the students in some cases was based on personal experiences, this knowledge was also based on indirect knowledge related to external information sources and/or images that led to the formation of their perceptions and views. The intervention in the form of a guest lecture provided students with new knowledge and a range of experiences that had an effect on their perceptions. The acquired new knowledge and experiences concerned various forms of art, communication by and with these artists along with mutual cooperation during the artistic exercise in conjunction with the guest lecture. It also provided students with insights about their own teacher training course, their future as teachers in art education and their role as possible educators of pupils with and without disabilities within schools. Moreover, the intervention exposed them to the possibilities of working outside the context of schools with artists with disabilities.

ADJUSTING THE IMAGE

The research on authentic learning experiences of Bain and Hasio (2011) focuses on teaching at inclusive schools in the United States. Their (Bain and Hasio 2011) study shows that students of education who attend or give lessons to pupils with disabilities deal regularly with anxieties about this target group. While working in the field, teachers in training learn to better empathize with students with a disability; it increases their empathic capacity, resulting in the diminishing of their biases and anxieties. Working with groups of pupils with learning disabilities enhances the self-esteem, self-knowledge and teaching skills of the teacher education students (Bain and Hasio 2011).

During the intervention of our study, the students became aware of their perceptions and were prepared to adjust their own views regarding persons with disabilities. Prejudices often arise through experiences and visual cultural images that feed into stereotypes. 'Contact theory' developed by Gordon Allport (Allport cited in Van de Maat 2016: 4) sees personal contact as the most effective method to eliminate mutual biases and images based on stereotypes between participants from different groups of people. Encounters help diminish anxieties by acquiring new and different knowledge about each other during the interaction. This results in better understanding and the growth of empathy towards each other. Encounters need to occur on a voluntary basis between groups or individuals who have a sense of equality or feel equal in hierarchy (Van de Maat 2016).

Prejudices, also discussed as 'resistances' between groups or individuals by education philosopher and pedagogue Gert Biesta (2017: 13), require a middle ground. Biesta (2017) refers to the middle ground as dialogue – an existential space of being together 'that seeks to do justice to all partners involved' (2017: 14). Moreover, Biesta (2017) references the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas who calls an encounter with the other and the world of the other unpredictable.



Figure 1-5: Presentation and collaborative artwork in progress, students from Amsterdam University of the Arts and artists from The Outsider Art Studio, Amsterdam (photos by the authors with permission for publication of all participants).

This leads to resistance or a conflict in the world of the 'I' because the I has to relate to the world of the other (Biesta 2017). Only when the I understands what it means to be I, can the I meet the other as Other and may not deprive the Other of his/her otherness. This primarily ethical responsibility of the I towards the Other makes the relationship asymmetrical, according to Levinas. He sees this asymmetry as non-reciprocal (Duyndam and Poorthuis 2003). The I cannot expect reciprocity or even demand something from the Other because the I is endlessly responsible for the Other. This ethical requirement can be implemented through our actions and applied in pedagogical relationships, because the pedagogue, and not the pupil, is always responsible for the pedagogical situation in which they find themselves, responding to the needs and interests of the Other (Kallio-Tavin 2013).

Biesta (2017) considers it the task of education to create dialogical spaces to remove resistance through transforming the resistance into meaningful

experiences in the lives of pupils. In essence, this ethical space of dialogue shows similarities with the descriptions of the educational concept of 'third spaces' described by Gutiérrez et al. (1999: 287). Third spaces are symbolic, hybrid spaces where cultural or ideological differences or resistances between groups or students are transformed into meaningful spaces of dialogue or zones of learning and development. Gutiérrez (2008) outlines third spaces as expanded 'zones of proximal development' (Vygotsky cited in Gutiérrez 2008: 152), as rich and transformative learning environments. Our case study conducted at the Amsterdam University of the Arts shows similarities with the concept of third spaces. It creates both a symbolic space and literally a space of encounter, a middle ground, for both parties – the students and artists – where they can learn as equal participants with and from each other.

The results of the questionnaires of our study elaborated the students' thoughts and biases during the project often times indicating signs of both stagnation and transformation. One student claimed to have been very biased, yet a different student indicated only a little bias. Another of the participating students noted that previously gained experiences and knowledge did not lead to prejudices. While one student indicated that after the study, he could now leave aside prejudices concerning artists/persons with a disability. Another student expected these artists to be less intelligent but changed her opinion after the intervention and said that 'it wasn't that bad after all'. The same student stated that the disabled artists may have some kind of social disadvantage, but she had not expected the artists to be so articulate.

When it came to art, different prejudices also emerged. In discussing the aesthetic quality of the art created by the visiting artists, one student noted that he had expected it to be of an inferior level. Another student expected that the artists would not be able to make art. One student pondered if the artists could also substantiate their art and expected to see childlike drawings.

Our study concludes that the views of the students are based on both their existing knowledge about, and experiences with, persons with disabilities, as well as prejudices and stereotypes they hold about these persons. Both written and spoken answers show that most students knew something about both psychological and intellectual forms of disabilities and several students introduced personal stories mainly about psychological disabilities, for example experiences with pupils with autism spectrum disorders or ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) within their school and/or private surroundings. The perceptions of the students were often caused by external factors, such as stories from others, the environment and media. Both positive and negative opinions were influenced by the above-mentioned external factors. Most of the students seemed to talk freely and openly about their experiences during the interviews.

For the students interviewed in our research, the added value of the guest artists' lesson was evident. The difference between regular (guest) lecturers and the visiting artists was clearly expressed. According to the students, the lesson undertaken in our research was less devised, delineated and directed than the regular guest lectures. The encounter with the visiting artists helped the students form new thoughts on their teacher training course and the necessity of introducing pedagogical lessons about diverse learners. The students thought that visiting an art centre for disabled artists as well as current special education schools could allow for the application of learned theory and provide better preparation for a possible career within various art educational settings for students or artists with learning disabilities. The students

also shared insights from the design of this inclusive guest lesson. They felt that the planned programme was too full and thought it would have been improved if divided over several lessons in smaller groups. This would also benefit the students by allowing them to become better acquainted with one or more artists at a more individual level. The students also recommended this lesson be incorporated into the senior level teacher training courses.

Some of the students stated that, in order to be able to respond adequately to the learning needs of each pupil in their care, it is important for students to acquire both theoretical knowledge and practical experience and skills. The teacher training students also informed us that room for more attention, time, clarity and structure in art lessons is desirable for pupils with learning disabilities. The aim should also be to achieve a good balance between pupils with and without disabilities, so that every pupil feels comfortable. Within inclusive education, more customization is a must to guarantee the best development for every pupil. The students also stated that participation of the parents and/or possible caretakers of pupils with learning disabilities is important. Parental knowledge and experience can be of help in constructing inclusive educational settings.

EMPHASIS ON ART EDUCATION

In the light of this study, it is important to realize the significance of art-making and art education in the lives of pupils with learning disabilities. Art can be a vital means for persons with disabilities to connect with the world and form their identity as a participant in society. Where other ways are unattainable or inadequate, art-making has the potential to support the development of self-awareness and self-esteem of people with disabilities. This awareness along with the growth of personal visual imagery can result in the creation of powerful art works that can help refute negative or biased images of people with disabilities (Derby 2012; Taylor 2004). Art education can be empowering for learners with disabilities, and it offers the possibility to acquire competencies like aesthetic and practical skills as well as visual literacy, which will enable them to give form to their experiences within their own cultural contexts (Mullaney 2017; Taylor 2005). On the other hand, exposure to art activities alone might not be sufficient in the development of pupils or students. Effective instructional strategies are often needed for pupils with learning disabilities to be able to engage with the activities (Lee et al. 2017: 230).

However, the presence of skilled and creative art teachers within special education is often arbitrary. Subsequently, in higher education, where sometimes more inclusive forms of education are offered, persons with disabilities are confronted with educational systems that do not adequately match the individual possibilities or learning needs of these diverse learners. The educational systems arise from normative and ableist frameworks set out by people without disabilities. It is a task of education to recognize both differences and similarities between people and to ensure that people with disabilities can fully participate in society (Taylor 2004, 2005).

These blind spots on various levels within art education exist, not only in our thinking and acting but also in how limited and restrictive our view of other sensory forms of art and art education might be (Penketh 2017). This indicates that the lack of knowledge and experience about any restrictions has led to a normative image of what art education should comprise. For example,

the ability to use tools to make art is often linked to necessary fine motor skills. A great deal of importance is also attached to being able to see and look at things in order to be able to perceive or make art. Seeing is considered necessary, in the most ultimate sense, to get to know the world. Another critical pillar is independence – pupils should be able to act and think independently. People who are unable or less able to write, walk, see and/or speak do not meet this ‘normative representation’ and are therefore simply denied access and expression (Penketh 2017: 121).

Similar discoveries were made by Laes and Westerlund (2017) in their study to current music educational practices and music teacher training courses where they challenge the traditional approach and methods within music education. Interestingly Laes’ and Westerlund’s (2017) research plan shows similarities with our study, as the traditional hierarchal roles of expertise were questioned and reversed. In this case, musicians with an intellectual disability were the experts who provided the students with lessons. The research was conducted among students of the bachelor’s and master’s teacher training courses in music and focused on the student perceptions with regard to pupils with disabilities. The musical knowledge of the visiting musicians was not greater per se, but the underlying emancipatory question in the research setting was ‘Who is learning what? And from whom?’ (Laes and Westerlund 2017: 6).

Their (Laes and Westerlund 2017) research seeks to find answers to how music education can be transformed to better address issues of inclusion and diversity within teacher training courses. Laes and Westerlund (2017) approach this need for transformation from a performative point of view of the traditional position of the teacher. In this context, they explain performativity as the traditional interpretation and acquired position enjoyed by the music teacher. This relates to the social expectations of the existing content and meaning of the teaching staff. The traditional interpretation of what it means to be a teacher would, in reality, impede a transformation and renewal. Redefining the profession of a teacher would broaden the vision of a given subject and conceptions of professional expertise. This should, among other things, lead to a pedagogy that is democratic, more flexible in methods and attentive to inclusive and diverse settings for learning – a pedagogy that is not based on the conventional interpretation of the music practice alone, but one that would serve all music learners.

A transformation requires a conscious, activist and self-critical attitude of the students as becoming teachers. According to Laes and Westerlund (2017), it is the task and responsibility of higher education to support students in social critical thinking strategies regarding the content of their future profession, critically addressing the professional discourses and seeing beyond normative methods and binary thinking in general and specifically in special education, which in fact upholds marginalization. They encourage the acknowledgement of the fact that everyone can learn from and teach one another within a community, while also suggesting that ‘social learning’ environments should be provided for teacher training students (Laes and Westerlund 2017: 11).

The parallels become clear between the music teaching practice and art education in a broader context. The issues Laes and Westerlund (2017) address in their study concerning music teaching practises and teacher training can also be drawn to the art teaching and art teacher training practices. A transformation towards more social and democratic pedagogies and methods is



Figure 6: Bo Verlinden, *Devilish Dictator*, n.d., Amsterdam. © Outsider Art Studio, Amsterdam.

needed so that all learners can be provided with authentic, comprehensive art experiences (Derby 2012: 3).

OUTCOMES OF THE ARTISTIC ENCOUNTER

None of the students who participated in the intervention – in which they became acquainted with artists with intellectual and/or psychological disabilities – had ever had a similar experience. Several reactions show that the intervention was received positively and the students claimed to have learned from the experience in different areas including: from and about the artists, their art, art in general and about themselves. According to most students in our study, all these experiences contribute positively to their teacher training and the preparation for a professional practice in which teacher training students encounter different pupils. One of the students informed us that these sorts of encounters help you see the individuals instead of using generalizations about these target groups. The students answered extensively about the art of the



Figure 7: Hans Groenendijk, *Searching Elephant*, n.d., Amsterdam. © Outsider Art Studio, Amsterdam.

guest artists and the quality of the artworks. They also learned from the artists about art from different angles, such as art-historical perspectives, figurative and abstract art, using other materials and ways of creating a work of art.

The knowledge and expertise of the artists with regard to art was generally underestimated by the students. The artworks produced by the visiting artists with disabilities were seen as more 'professional' than expected, as was their creativity when it comes to the use of materials and the stories that underlie their works. In the presentation by the artists, they showed their knowledge about the professional world of the visual arts. The verbosity of the artists was referred to regularly by the students, as well as their enthusiasm and passion for the arts. It became clear that the disabilities of the artists do not stand in the way of a professional art practice. Some students indicated that in general, they find the art well-made and professional looking.

Few students had ever worked in a collaborative setting on a common artwork. This was also the case for the visiting artists. Not only did the students experience a presentation about the art and the skills of the artists, but they also completed a collaborative work with the visiting artists with disabilities. The meditation at the start of the assignment was assessed by the students to be generally pleasant. A minority of students did not feel at ease in the cooperative setting of the artistic exercise and therefore avoided contact with the artists. While most students did not experience discomfort during the exercise, some were reticent to make contact with artists nevertheless. The spontaneity and intuitive art-making during the art exercise by the artists inspired one student to work more instinctively and less from a predetermined thought-process. The students also gained information about art centres providing



Figure 8: Wijnand de Vries, *Mandrill*, n.d., Amsterdam. © Outsider Art Studio, Amsterdam.

support for students and artists with learning disabilities. This form of extra-curricular arts education was new to the students, and many showed an interest in learning more about it.

The intervention also provided insights for their upcoming profession as art educators. References were made by students to educational situations where pupils with learning disabilities attend the classes. It was stated that it is important for a teacher to have possibilities and enough professional space to be able to provide individual support to pupils with learning disabilities during their development. For this, the teaching conditions should be optimized. The students considered patience, clarity, structure, good time management, different communication options and the possibility for customized attention as important pedagogical qualities of a teacher. These student descriptions show similarities with the description of adaptive teacher competencies that

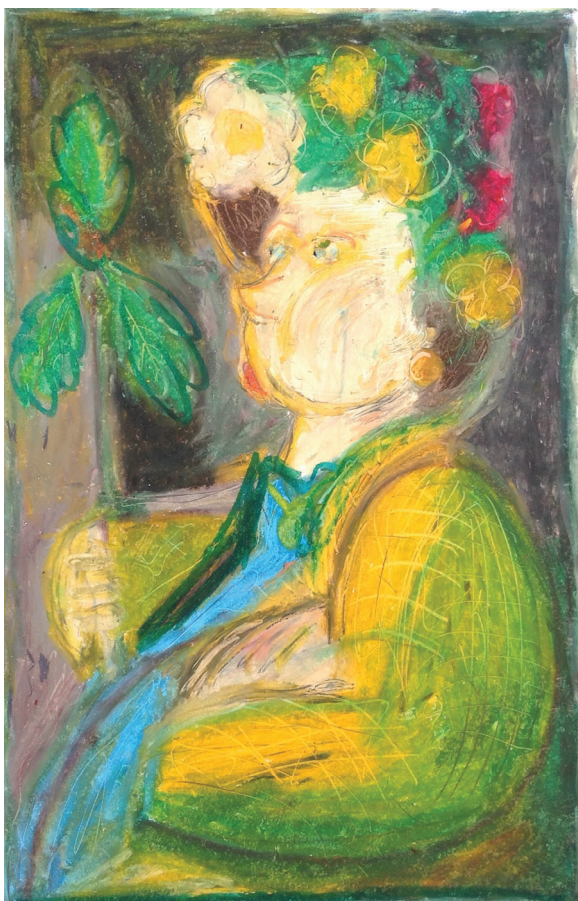


Figure 9: Chris Dierdorp, *Flora, n.d., Amsterdam*. © Outsider Art Studio, Amsterdam.

focus on tuning and adjusting to the individual learning needs of a pupil (Vogt and Rogalla 2009). The importance of an individual approach was indicated by several students. According to the students, the pedagogical setting and the starting point in the class should not be aimed at the group but should be formulated from a more individual and inclusive setting that supports and meets the learning potential and educational needs of each individual pupil.

One of the students spoke about the importance of gaining experience in special education schools. She considers this experience necessary to be able to make good art educational lessons for students with learning disabilities. According to her, one can come across pupils with diverse levels of learning abilities, and in this way, an art teacher could adjust their lessons accordingly.

The intervention was an eye opener for many students, especially in learning about people who deal with art in a professional manner and have an intellectual and/or psychological disability. The students had an intensive experience in a short time with the visiting artists as guest lecturers. As a result, existing stereotypes and views about people with disabilities changed or were adjusted. This intervention was also an impulse to make students

more aware of their role as future teachers in relation to teaching pupils and/or adults with disabilities and made the students also aware of the current teacher training curriculum and the lack of adequate pedagogical training in teaching diverse learners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The students stated that a continuation of these types of lessons is desirable and that a lesson like this should also be introduced for the senior classes. Additionally, they suggested that an informative and collaborative lesson like this should be held for pupils in primary and secondary education. The insights gained in this research lead to multiple suggestions towards inclusive (art) education. Inclusive (art) education is still in its infancy in the Netherlands, which is why additional qualitative research is desirable to confirm and extend the insights already gained. One of the students spoke about the necessity of acquiring theoretical and practical experience to be able to give adequate lessons to pupils with an impairment of any kind. It is important that theory and practice are linked together within teacher training courses that attend to a diversity of learners. In order for teachers to adequately adjust their teaching methods, there should be (experimental) spaces, for example in the form of 'development labs', where current regular schools and special schools, teachers and students from teacher training programmes learn from and about each other with the aim of transition towards inclusive art education.

Awareness of disability studies pedagogy in general and in collaboration with art education, and the inter- and transdisciplinary possibilities emerging from those fields as an alternative artistic language and reality (Derby 2012, 2016) should be given foot in the art and teacher training courses within the art academies in the Netherlands. Also, critical awareness of the communication and language used concerning persons with disabilities should be introduced. This should be scrutinized for the sake of banning binaries and marginalization of minority groups with any form of disability (Eisenhouer 2008; Keifer-Boyd et al. 2018).

The binding nature of art and art education requires more research in relation to what it can mean for collaborative educational settings between different groups of learners and how they learn with and from each other. Moreover, in the light of biases or stereotypes about pupils with learning disabilities, collaborative educational settings should be set up so that all parties can learn from one another, including parents.

Signing the United Nation CRPD is binding and new policies are necessary in the Netherlands regarding a transformation towards inclusive education and reformulation of the curricula of many forms of education, including the teacher training courses. International examples of transformation from special and regular education to inclusive forms of education can be of assistance in the long and complicated path that a transformation comprises.

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