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Education Based on Art as Inclusive Education²

Extended summary

The paper is aimed at a theoretical reconsideration of the relationship between inclusion and art in education from the perspective of opportunities that art classes offer for a genuine inclusion of children with developmental difficulties in the regular education system. Accordingly, the main aim of the paper is to discuss the assumptions for creating equality and justice in education by establishing the links between the underlying concepts of inclusion and art as systems, with the ultimate goal of identifying the values on which the idea of art in education is based and pointing to opportunities it offers for developing a good quality education for all children. In the first part of the paper, the authors elaborate on inclusive education as one of the fundamental problems in education which has instigated a lot of research and theoretical debates and has become a significant aspect of the education system reforms aimed at radical changes that would result not only in placing the marginalized children in the center of attention, but also in equality and quality of education for all children through the creation of an open and flexible education system. In the second part of the paper, the authors look at the characteristics of the prevalent academic discourse in education, as well as the general characteristics of art in education and the potential it offers for education of children with developmental and learning difficulties, especially in terms of changing not only the perceptions and

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culture of teaching, but also educational institutions by making them more flexible and open for diversity. The pedagogical implications of connecting the concepts of inclusion and art in education are reflected in the possibility of creating different attitudes, namely, realizing that though some children have reduced cognitive abilities, their imagination is intact and functional, and that imaginative processes spurred by art enable them to explore and express certain concepts. In addition, the paper affirms the opinion that all children have a potential for learning and participating in activities, given that using art in working with children indicates the importance of the belief that pupils with developmental difficulties can be as successful as all other pupils if their specific learning characteristics are acknowledged and if they are given an opportunity to express themselves through numerous artistic languages. The key research conclusions are as follows: art education adds additional and specific quality to inclusive education, including an authentic teaching and learning that requires dealing with the unexpected and possesses the elements of uncertainty and surprise, the change of perceptions and evaluation of individual differences, providing different opportunities for participation and many subtle languages for creating and sharing meaning.

Keywords: inclusion, education, art, academic discourse, children with developmental difficulties.

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