

Discovering the learning potential of pupils with SENs through art therapy in Hong Kong and Taiwan

Duan-Rong (Ruth) Lin

ABSTRACT

These case studies examine the learning potential for pupils with special education needs (SENs) through work with art therapy in mainstream schools in Hong Kong and Taiwan. The spontaneous creative art-making process in art therapy has not only been therapeutic but has also uncovered pupils' learning potentials. It is felt that the outcome of these case studies in discovering learning potential can be generalised to other children with SENs because of the potential for artistic learning found in every child. Because each child is an individual with his/her own learning style, respect for individual pupils is essential. The article recommends teachers consider and adjust their teaching attitude, methods and materials. Moreover, their attitude to children with SENs should always be optimistic. Art therapy has been found to be a very effective method in helping pupils achieve an emotional well-being by enhancing their self-confidence, self-esteem and motivations toward learning.

INTRODUCTION

It is unfortunately very common for people to know little about children with special education needs (SENs), and such a lack of knowledge represents a significant gap in the understanding of these children and their learning needs. Generally speaking, teachers are not schooled in mainstream knowledge and teaching methods needed to support children with SENs. In my working experience in mainstream schools, however, I became aware that some teachers seemed to choose to not adapt their teaching methods or the purposes of their lessons or display an understanding of the pupils' learning potential and styles. This is a situation which creates low levels of learning motivation, low self-confidence and low self-esteem for such children as they are left behind the others in their class. Relationships with their peers are already poor due to their learning difficulties, speech difficulties and poor social skills and so a perceived lack

of support by teachers prompted these case studies which aims to enhance the knowledge and understanding of teachers (and people in general) about the pupils' learning. It is vitally important for teachers to become more positive regarding their SEN pupils' learning.

ART THERAPY FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SENS) IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS IN HONG KONG AND TAIWAN

I have worked for the past two years by exploring art therapy with pupils in a Hong Kong college. The pupils are junior level, aged between 7 and 10 years. One of art therapy's aims is the support of pupils with social and learning difficulties. To ensure the quality of support to individual group participants group art therapy is designed for maximum of ten pupils. Art therapy's inclusion in the college can be seen as somewhat as a pioneering move so it seems worthwhile to share the work I have been doing and its recommendations