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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Transformative Potential of Outsider Art for Neurodivergent Artists

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Abstract

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: The intersections of inclusion, resilience, and socialisation within artistically stimulating environments are increasingly recognised in the education of individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) and Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). However, scholarly attention remains limited regarding pre-professional support systems that integrate artefiletic (reflective) educational principles with studio practice.
OBJECTIVE: This paper explores how artistic engagement in the field of outsider art offers transformative opportunities for advancing human rights and fostering sociocultural participation.
METHODOLOGY: The study employs a qualitative longitudinal case study design (2016–2024), utilising participatory observation and unstructured interviews to track the development of a neurodivergent artist ("Ms. Petra") within a university-based inclusive studio in the Czech Republic.
RESULTS: Findings demonstrate that long-term studio engagement enabled the participant to transition from a medical model of disability to a sociocultural one. Specifically, the artistic practice served as a non-verbal catalyst for emotional articulation, strengthened self-identity, and established a sustainable support network involving family and university facilitators.
CONCLUSION: The research confirms that resilience is a learned educational outcome fostered by safe, democratic studio environments. The proposed holistic studio model offers a transferable framework for supporting the lifelong learning and professionalisation of artists with dual exceptionality.

INTRODUCTION

Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are increasingly participating in studio-based artistic practices across Europe and beyond (Cardinal, 1972; Maizels, 2016; Vick & Sexton-Radek, 2008). However, there remain notable limitations in the collaboration between families of non-professional artists with disabilities and professionals in the fields of art education, gallery programming and outreach, special education, and social work-based activation (Haveri & Lilja, 2022; Miller, 2020). This lack of coordination hinders the development of a comprehensive and integrated support system for the lifelong learning of artists with exceptionalities (Derby, 2012). The present article offers a concise review of the existing literature concerning the intersection of reflective art education and inclusive studio practice. The artefiletic approach provides a structured framework for fostering the creative expression of individuals with disabilities, whose artistic output is often situated within the domains of outsider art or art brut. It further promotes inclusive pedagogical models that are implemented both within the Czech Republic and across international contexts. It focuses not only on the individual artist, but also on the provision of education in safe and democratic environments, and on the involvement of formal caregivers. Such a holistic framework strengthens the sustainability and long-term impact of studio practice on the quality of life of artists with disabilities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Art studios and creative centres are widely recognised as open, inclusive, and supportive environments that facilitate the artistic development of non-professional creators (Davies *et al.* 2013). These settings typically ensure access to appropriate materials and provide opportunities for structured art education. In addition, they promote the acquisition of artistic skills relevant to gallery practices and foster meaningful interactions among artists with and without disabilities (Sellen, 2008). Such institutions consistently uphold inclusive values and ethical educational principles, thereby contributing to the social integration of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Within this context, they present a significant pedagogical challenge for art educators (Lister *et al.* 2009; Ludins-Katz & Katz, 1989; Sochor, 2014).

The broader philosophical foundations of these centres are grounded in the understanding of art as a therapeutic, communicative, and lifelong educational process. This perspective encompasses psychotherapeutic dimensions and positions art as a medium for expressing resistance to social injustice and the violation of human rights, as articulated in constitutional and legal frameworks across various national contexts (Fox & Macpherson, 2015; Haveri & Lilja, 2022; Maizels, 2016; Solvang, 2018).

The societal shift from a medical model to a sociocultural model of disability, which is evident in the Czech Republic, the European Union, and North America, reflects the evolving nature of artistic engagement among individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and autism spectrum disorders (ASD). In addition, this transformation emphasises the need for interdisciplinary inquiry that connects the fields of art education, special pedagogy, and social inclusion, as highlighted by Miller (2020).

Interdisciplinary approaches have played a historically significant role in shaping the contemporary status of artists with disabilities and continue to inform inclusive practices (Miller, 2020; Sochor, 2014; Maizels, 2016). However, their effectiveness is contingent upon the depth and quality of cross-sector collaboration. Such collaboration enables the development of artistic competencies and personal skills through education and mental health support, while also fostering social inclusion and personal growth. Conversely, insufficient interdisciplinary engagement may inadvertently reinforce marginalisation (Derby, 2012; Haveri & Lilja, 2022; Laitinen *et al.* 2020; Röske, 2005).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main aim was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the socialisation process of an artist with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD) through her artistic practice, and to identify the conditions that enable her lifelong learning. An additional aim was to interpret the sociocultural model of disability within the context of Czech educational practice. The research was conducted continuously between 2016 and 2024. At its outset, the following central research question was formulated: *How can authorial artistic creation within a studio environment support Petra's socialisation and enhance her resilience-related resources in the context of education?*

Given the individual characteristics of the participant, a qualitative methodological approach was adopted, specifically a longitudinal in case study. This design was selected for its capacity to capture the complexity of factors associated with the research phenomenon. Case study methodology is widely utilised across disciplines such as psychology, sociology, art theory, and education. It typically concentrates on a single social unit, which may include an individual, a family, an ethnic group, a local community, or an institution (Tellis, 1997).

The study was based on the premise that a thorough examination of a single case can contribute to a deeper understanding of similar cases (Yin, 2009). The research design acknowledges that the concept of reflection

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has long been integral to artistic and design practice. The methodological framework also draws on international research, particularly the work presented in Action Research for Inclusive Education (Armstrong & Moore, 2004). The content of the case study focuses on historical context, environmental factors, and attitudes that preceded the observed events. It explores potential causes, influences, experiences, and processes related to the phenomenon under investigation. An instrumental case study approach, as defined by E. R. Stake (1995), was employed. This involved identifying a specific phenomenon and subsequently examining in detail the cases and circumstances that exemplify it.

Data Collection and Analysis

The methods employed for data collection in this study were shaped by the nature of the artistic and educational activities themselves. The following approaches were utilised:

1. The research was conducted through participatory observation from the perspective of an insider (Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000). This approach, supported by a series of intentional steps, enabled a deeper understanding of the environment associated with the artistic practices of individuals with intellectual disabilities, as well as the pedagogical and promotional strategies that support this form of art.
2. Unstructured interviews formed an integral part of the research design. These were documented in pedagogical journals maintained by individual instructors and the author of the study (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The interviews were conducted with artists with intellectual disabilities, their family members, and members of the public. They focused on participants' experiences, perceptions, and reflections regarding the artistic expression of individuals with special educational needs.
3. Selective video studies and structured interviews were conducted during representative events such as exhibition openings, public discussions, and within the context of the artists' creative processes (Janík & Seidel, 2009; Walker & Boyer, 2018).
4. The method of continuous note-taking was employed throughout the research period. Its purpose was not only to record observed events, but also to interpret and reflect upon them in relation to the studied environment (Have, 2004; Pope *et al.* 2000).

In the case of Ms. Petra, field notes included interviews with her parents, insights from direct observation conducted by the participating instructor during her creative work in the studio, as well as observations made in her home environment.

Studio Concept

The value framework of the studio can be summarised into several key principles and thematic areas. The first principle, accessibility, refers to the provision of artistic activities for artists with varying levels of support needs, taking into account their individual limitations (Haveri & Lilja, 2022; Huhmarniemi & Hiltunen, 2023). This did not solely involve creating a safe and stimulating artistic environment within a university faculty studio, but also included the provision of regular personal assistance, barrier-free access, mobility support, grant funding for activities, special educational interventions, and cooperation with social rehabilitation services.

The implementation of the principle of equality was based on the assumption that no individual holds greater value than another. Artistic creation was regarded as one of the possible pathways for expressing one's abilities. Artistic education and projects focused on existential themes served as a means of strengthening personal responsibility and developing professional competencies (Haveri & Lilja, 2022; Miller, 2021; Röske, 2005; Sochor, 2015).

The intersections of the principle of social and cultural inclusion within interdisciplinary theoretical discourse in Education for learners with special educational needs (SEN) and Disability Studies can be defined as a specific form of integration that actively removes inequalities and prevents exclusion. Inclusion was considered essential not only for the artists themselves but also for society as a whole.

The studio environment facilitated the artistic development of learners with special educational needs by removing structural and interpersonal obstacles to meaningful social interaction (Boeltzig *et al.* 2009; Collins, *et al.* 2022). Artistic activities were developed in settings that respected the specific needs of artists with disabilities, gradually improving access to both material and psychological resources (Boeltzig & Hasnain, 2012; Haveri & Lilja, 2022; Sochor, 2015).

Resilience is understood as a fundamental prerequisite for effective learning. It encompasses the ability to cope constructively with failure. Learners who exhibit higher levels of resilience are generally better equipped to manage mistakes, respond to criticism, and overcome obstacles, which enables them to acquire key competences within creative and exploratory educational contexts. This concept intersects with the philosophy of art brut or outsider art, which highlights the self-healing potential of creative activity and the development of communicative and character-based qualities in the artist's personality (Haveri & Lilja, 2022; Miller, 2021; Röske, 2005). The artefiletic methodology of structured reflection, articulated through the concept of 'returning to situations', is underpinned by the theoretical framework of reflective equilibrium. This foundation is substantiated by entries in the reflective journals of both the educators and the author (Slavík, 2000).

These journals recorded significant themes related to both the individual and the community. The emerging artistic artefact, within the framework of artefiletika and the international concept of art as therapy, served primarily as a medium for expressing experiential content and emphasised personal reflective

communication accompanying artistic expression in a safe environment (Slavík, 2000; Sochor, 2015). The approach prioritised respect for the individuality of artists with disabilities and aimed to provide them with maximum opportunities for barrier-free creation and self-presentation within institutions (Miller, 2020; Slavík, 2000; Sochor, 2015).

Inclusive approaches also incorporated elements of occupational therapy and social rehabilitation. The combination of these strategies aimed to enhance work-related activities, self-care, and psychomotor development, while simultaneously supporting emotional, self-actualising, and social growth in individuals with intellectual disabilities (IDD) or autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Artistic interaction was intended to foster expressive communication and the development of practical skills, helping adult artists overcome obstacles and adapt to life's challenges (López-Escribano & Orío-Aparicio, 2024).

The area of strategic communication and network-building within the studio was supported by an initial respect for the communicative patterns that artists with disabilities brought into the research environment. The studio community, led by the researcher, recognised that the absence of appropriate communication support could hinder participation and inclusion (Haveri & Lilja, 2022; Huhmarniemi & Hiltunen, 2023). Artists with dual exceptionality felt included when they were able to express their views on their own work, their community, and the society in which they lived. Their voices thus became more audible within the public sphere (Wexler & Derby, 2015). Ultimately, the most important role in networks supporting studios and artistic spaces was played by the artists themselves and their creative output (Haveri & Lilja, 2022; Laitinen *et al.* 2020; Röske, 2005).

Research Sample

The research sample was selected through purposive sampling and consisted of a single female artist with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). In accordance with the ethical standards of research, informed consent was obtained from Ms. Petra and her parents, who acted as legal guardians, prior to the commencement of data collection and analysis. Consent included agreement to anonymise all data for publication in a public academic journal. Ms. Petra agreed to participate in the study and was fully informed about its aims and content.

Throughout the research period (2016–2024), meetings with Ms. Petra took place on average twice per month during nine months of each year. The studio activities were initiated at the university under the supervision of Pavel Sochor in 2014. During studio sessions, exhibitions, and public discussions, Ms. Petra regularly interacted with three to five other artists with disabilities, who were not included in the presented research sample. This article adopts the terminology 'individuals identified as persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), as it aligns with a person-first language approach and is supported by advocacy organisations within the IDD community, such as Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE). Moreover, this linguistic choice reflects a critical awareness of the potentially stigmatising effects that may arise from the use of the medical classification 'intellectual and developmental disabilities'.

WHO IS MS. PETRA?

Ms. Petra was born in 1993 and lived alternately with her parents in both urban and rural settings throughout the research period. Her autism significantly influences the way she perceives and interacts with the world, differing from the typical patterns observed in neurotypical individuals. She has been diagnosed with a lifelong condition affecting perception, imagination and social communication. Despite these challenges, both anecdotal accounts and direct observation suggest that Ms. Petra is highly expressive, both verbally and non-verbally. Her perceptual focus often gravitates toward details that may appear insignificant to others, yet she demonstrates an exceptional memory for texts and phrases that capture her interest. Petra exhibits a strong desire to adapt to her environment, which frequently results in internal tension, emotional strain, and affective responses. The individual employs artistic creation as a tool for processing personal experiences related to both success and failure, whether in educational settings or in everyday life. The creative process serves a function of emotional self-regulation, enabling deeper introspective insight into her own experiences. Based on long-term observation, it can be stated that her artistic practice demonstrates a verifiable self-therapeutic effect, contributing to psychological stability and personal development.

In interviews, her parents noted that daughter Petra tends to imitate and internalise expressive behaviours observed in others, often identifying with individuals who have made a strong impression on her. They interpret this as a unique form of communication and do not discourage it. Petra displayed a remarkable musical ear, a strong sense of rhythm, and keen observational skills from early childhood. She demonstrated the ability to reproduce melodies with remarkable immediacy and often spontaneously substituted original lyrics with her own, a creative practice she continues to enjoy from an early age. This musical engagement frequently brings joy to those around her. Her enduring passion for music is evident in her frequent singing, rhythmic experimentation, and exploration of various musical instruments.

Given her pronounced capacity for imitation and her strong inclination toward social interaction, her parents decided to enrol her in a mainstream preschool. This environment allowed her to share experiences

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with peers and to develop within a natural social context. However, due to legislative limitations in the Czech Republic at the time concerning the education of children with intellectual and multiple disabilities, Petra was not permitted to continue her education in a mainstream primary school. As a result, she began her compulsory schooling at a special school for children with learning difficulties. This transition disrupted her existing social relationships within the local community.

This sense of social disconnection persisted even after Petra transferred to a mainstream primary school, where she completed her education as an integrated pupil with the support of a teaching assistant. During her time at the special school, she had intensely focused on the specific behaviours of her classmates, quickly incorporating these into her own repertoire of rituals. Much of her energy was directed towards emulating her peers with disabilities.

Seeking a more inclusive environment, her parents arranged for Petra to transfer to a mainstream school that was willing to support her integration. She joined an established class at the end of Year 3. One of the challenges of this transition was that neither Petra nor her family were known in this part of the city. Although both Petra's parents and her prospective classmates initially expressed understandable concerns, she was eventually accepted by the children. As time progressed, the families of her classmates also came to recognise that their initial fears had been unfounded. On the contrary, they began to value the experience as an opportunity for their children to develop tolerance, empathy, and an understanding of the principles of inclusion.

However, Petra was unable to participate in leisure activities with her classmates outside of school. She became a social outsider both within her peer community in her place of residence and within the natural social environment of her new school. Despite this, her family remained grateful for the opportunity to pursue an inclusive educational pathway, which helped Petra disengage from many of the negative behavioural patterns she had adopted from her former classmates and supported her in managing various social situations in ways that reduced the risk of exclusion. These formative experiences, encompassing both positive and negative aspects, continue to manifest in Petra's verbal expressions and artistic themes throughout her adulthood. Her creative work frequently reflects earlier emotional and social experiences, indicating their lasting impact on her personal development and identity formation.

At the end of Petra's compulsory nine-year basic education, her parents came to the conclusion that no suitable follow-up educational pathway was available that would continue to build on the positive progress she had made. The option of enrolling in a secondary special school was considered counterproductive, as it could potentially reintroduce undesirable social behaviors that Petra had gradually and with considerable effort overcome after leaving the special primary school. Due to the nature of her intellectual disability, mainstream secondary education was not a viable option, and at that time, there were no vocational programs tailored to students with autism spectrum disorder that would nurture her specific talents, particularly in the visual arts and music.

In response, her parents adopted an alternative educational strategy focused on cultivating Petra's strengths while simultaneously reducing the stigmatization associated with special education, which had not adequately prepared her for participation in mainstream society. They recognized the potential of artistic expression and its public presentation as a meaningful avenue for personal development. Private education emerged as a viable solution, allowing Petra to continue developing in areas she had grown attached to through her experiences in art therapy and music therapy workshops. This initiative resulted in the development of a distinctive, personalized educational program that integrated multiple disciplines and involved collaboration among a diverse group of professionals and educators. The program was designed to foster creative originality and to strengthen the skills Petra had previously acquired. Its primary aim was to nurture Petra's individual talents, particularly her expressive abilities in visual art, her musical sensitivity, and her manual skills. These areas of development were supported through structured activities provided by a private music school and a cultural education center.

As part of this initiative, Ms. Petra began collaborating with a researcher, which led to a deeper recognition of her artistic potential. Following the completion of her formal schooling, visual art became a regular and structured part of her weekly routine. Since 2015, her creative work has been further developed in a newly established art studio affiliated with the Faculty of Education at a public university. Petra is currently engaged in three main areas of creative activity: painting, singing, and craftwork. Her family continues to play an active role in supporting her progress toward greater autonomy. A particularly important aspect of her social inclusion is the involvement of her sisters and their families, who provide natural models of everyday functioning and serve as a source of inspiration in navigating various life situations. Through these close relationships, Petra has gradually taken on new social roles, including becoming a sister-in-law and, more recently, an aunt. These developments have significantly contributed to her personal growth and the enhancement of her social skills.

WHAT DOES ARTISTIC CREATION AND COLLABORATION WITH THE STUDIO MEAN TO MS. PETRA?

Petra's engagement with artistic creation and her long-term collaboration with a university-based studio have proven to be transformative in her personal

development, emotional regulation, and social integration. According to her parents, the initial stages of her artistic journey marked the discovery of a new mode of expression. While verbal communication had previously been her primary channel, painting and drawing introduced a complementary form of self-expression. Petra has always enjoyed discussing a wide range of topics, from everyday experiences to existential questions. Some of these themes recur frequently in her conversations, while others are processed internally through the act of painting. Once visually expressed, Petra often feels no further need to revisit them verbally. Notably, certain themes, such as fear, were initially expressed through Petra's artwork. One example is a painting she titled *Fears*, which served as a catalyst for initiating dialogue about anxieties she had previously been unable to articulate verbally.

Her canvases often reflect her thought processes and emotional states, incorporating written notes and drawn figures that provide insight into her inner world. Long-term participatory observation by researchers, parents, and studio instructors has confirmed that artistic creation facilitates rapid emotional release, which in turn supports functional learning in areas such as craft techniques, literature study, cooperative learning, self-care routines, critical discussion, and self-presentation. According to her sister, the process of creating and exhibiting artwork repeatedly provides Petra with a sense of uniqueness and accomplishment. These experiences have a positive impact on her motivation to explore, learn, and remain socially engaged. Petra's collaboration with the studio has become a central theme of ongoing research. She has shown consistent interest in the installation, preservation, and digital archiving of her work. Her paintings have enabled her to form new and lasting social connections. Documenting Petra's artistic development contributed to her ability to orient herself in time and to form a clearer understanding of the concepts of past, present, and future, which she had previously found difficult to grasp. Her evolving temporal awareness was particularly evident in a painting entitled *It Works Without Time*, which also served as the subtitle of her solo exhibition held in 2012.

Initially, her parents expressed concerns about the unknown trajectory of her artistic development. Years later, her mother reflected on those early days, acknowledging that she had not anticipated how deeply art and exhibitions would become embedded in Petra's worldview. Throughout the research period, a key community of facilitators emerged around Petra, sustained by her family. The university studio became a space she regularly returned to, despite recurring psychosomatic challenges and interpersonal conflicts related to her health condition. The studio provided a structured environment defined by consistent routines, a stable spatial setting, empathetic interpersonal support, and active involvement of students in special education. This combination enabled Petra to experience success within an inclusive and supportive learning context. Her performative presence at exhibitions and discussions with university students provided meaningful opportunities for interaction. Observations and interviews with family and friends revealed that visitors attended exhibitions specifically to engage with Petra and her artwork. Since beginning her studio practice, Petra has become increasingly capable of articulating her emotions, as illustrated by her own reflection: "*I feel completely moved.*"

Petra's integration into society through the studio model can be described as a gradual yet consistently positive process. This complex trajectory has been shaped by multiple variables, including her health status, which remained largely unchanged throughout the research period. However, notable progress was observed in her self-advocacy and interest in gaining work experience within the protected labor market. A significant milestone was her participation in an international *art brut/outsider art* exhibition in 2023–2024, organized by the European Outsider Art

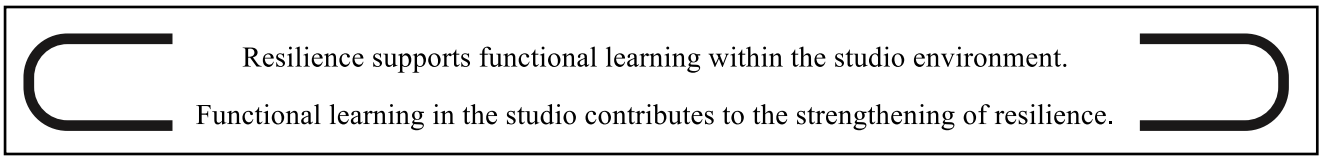

Fig. 1. Cyclical Relationship in Research – Diagram

Tab. 1. Key Identified Educational Elements in the Research

Education as a Tool for the Development of Resilience	
Safe Environment	A high-quality pedagogical approach creates an environment in which students are encouraged to take risks, make mistakes, and grow through the learning process.
Reflection and Feedback	Reflection-based learning supports students in developing the ability to face challenges and learn from them.
Support for Autonomy	Educational approaches that foster learner autonomy contribute to the development of greater self-confidence and resilience.

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Association (EOA), although she did not attend in person.

Local exhibitions, celebrations with family, discussions with instructors, university students, friends, artists, curators, and NGO social workers continue to play a central role in Petra's everyday life. These individuals contribute to her achievements and those of her family. Achievable goals have proven essential in fostering Petra's willingness to engage in repeated efforts toward personal growth. An effective strategy for exhibition planning has involved expanding collaboration across studio networks, both nationally and internationally, through conferences and joint grant initiatives coordinated by studio instructors (e.g., Ministry of Culture, EOA, institutional grants).

To support Petra's individualized artistic development plan, it was necessary to provide regular special education interventions, including music therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and social rehabilitation services tailored to her chronic anxiety and neurotic behavior, as diagnosed by a psychologist. Despite efforts, access to protected housing and employment within the sheltered labor market was not achieved during the research period. A notable accomplishment was Petra's involvement in a three-year project with a national theatre, contributing visualizations for contemporary music performances. This engagement also resulted in financial compensation through a formal work agreement. The following section introduces a model of cyclical interaction between resilience and learning. Within the context of artistic education, this relationship has proven particularly strong, as the creative process inherently involves uncertainty, evaluation, and personal investment.

Within the framework of the research, it is possible to describe and generalise the observed processes related to the research problem, which may serve as a basis for further scholarly discussion (Picture 1 and Table 1).

The case study demonstrated that both Petra and her surrounding community perceive her disability and artistic talent as integral elements of her enduring identity. However, perspectives differed regarding whether this dual exceptionality was viewed as a positive aspect of self-concept and personal advocacy (Miller, 2020; Swain & French, 2008). The research confirmed that artistic creation, participation in gallery activities, and the promotion of personal artwork supported by a specialized studio provide artists with disabilities with a meaningful space for self-reflection, identity development and psychological well-being (Haveri & Lilja, 2022; Miller, 2020; Sandahl, 2009). The studio model established collaborative values that enabled individuals to grow not only in artistic expression but also in communication, self-directed learning, and the development of interpersonal relationships. This was made possible through targeted support from special education professionals (Vick & Sexton-Radek, 2008; Wexler, 2005). Among research participants, professional artistic practice was most often associated with strong friendships, opportunities to educate the public,

Tab. 2. Factors Influencing Education in the Studio

Individual Factors of the Author with ADS and IDD
• Personality traits (e.g., openness, perseverance) • Disability-specific characteristics • Self-confidence and self-assessment • Motivation • Experiences with failure / success
Studio Environment
• Physical space (openness, aesthetics, accessibility of materials) • Social climate (collaboration vs. competition) • Opportunities for presentation and feedback
Pedagogical Approaches
• Reflective dialogue between teacher and student • Support for experimentation and mistakes • Guidance toward independence and critical thinking • Emotional safety in the studio
Process of Action-Based Creation
• Experimentation and risk • Reflection and self-reflection • Coping with frustration and uncertainty • Adaptation to criticism
Development of Resilience
• Ability to overcome obstacles • Learning from failure • Maintaining emotional and cognitive stability throughout the creative process • Long-term motivation and engagement

demonstrate personal capabilities, and strengthen self-confidence and independence (Lister *et al.* 2009). Facilitators played an essential role in promoting autonomy and equality. These included instructors, special educators, social workers, family members, and both formal and informal caregivers. Their support extended beyond artistic development and helped individuals overcome emotional and social barriers, thereby improving the overall quality of life for artists with dual exceptionality (Haveri & Lilja, 2022; Solvang, 2018). Within the framework of the research, it is possible to describe and generalise the observed processes related to the research problem, which may serve as a basis for further scholarly discussion (Table 2).

DISCUSSION

The main aim of the research was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the socialisation process of an artist with IDD and ASD. The classical education system was not vital for the student. According to her parents, the students had got problem with communication with other schoolmates, it aimed to the allocation from the collective and the student became an outsider in the class. Parents were supportive into inclusion of students, but all efforts were not successful. This trend was possible to find in other studies, where authors stated different problems with the inclusion of students of different age in the common classes. Authors quoted, that there is problem with communication, what was also found out in our research. The similar findings as in our research were found by authors (e.g. Holmes, 2024; Jury *et al.* 2021; Meindl *et al.* 2020). After the problem with the inclusion process in common classes, the students began collaborating with a researcher, which led to a deeper recognition of her artistic potential. As a results with this collaboration, the findings confirmed that artistic practice not only fostered individual creativity but also strengthened identity, self-confidence, and independence in a young woman with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism spectrum disorder. Her engagement with studio-based education at a public university proved to be an effective tool for learning and for challenging prevailing myths about intellectual disability. Artistic activity shaped her identity by offering opportunities to showcase her abilities and dismantle stereotypes suggesting that individuals with intellectual disabilities cannot achieve artistic or professional excellence (Sandahl, 2009; Sellen, 2008). All these findings aimed to successful socialization of student through the art in the studio.

The case study also highlighted the lifelong educational potential of the studio concept as a creative and training-oriented environment. The studio community enabled long-term functional group and individual learning, supported by special education and expert mentoring in the field of art. Structured individual and group artistic activities contributed to Petra's mental and cognitive development, while the emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration facilitated her social integration (Franklin, 2012; Sulewski *et al.* 2012). This article summarized key challenges, processes, and principles that influenced the organization of exhibitions featuring artwork created by individuals with disabilities. These insights were drawn from experiences within a university-based studio. The open studio model, where the research was conducted, was continuously shaped and innovated through collaboration with international studios and networks, including members of the European Outsider Art Association. There is needed to reflect some limitations, but they are eliminated by the approach of the research. The studio concept was used for one student with some disabilities, and this concept should not be appropriate and useful for other students with disabilities or with different disabilities. There is needed to realize other researchers. The further researches are reflected in the conclusion chapter.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight several key directions for future research in the field of inclusive education and artistic development for individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorder. Strengthening participation, creating supportive environments, and pursuing long-term systemic change are essential for enhancing the inclusion of artists with disabilities. A particularly important area for development is participatory research, in which self-advocates, individuals with intellectual disabilities, are recognized as equal members of the research team. Their involvement throughout all phases of the research process represents a crucial step toward strengthening their voice and promoting collaborative decision-making.

Future studies should focus on the long-term impact of studio-based art programs on both personal and professional development, as well as lifelong learning. It would be beneficial to examine, from an interdisciplinary perspective, the pre-professional preparation of neurodivergent artists, their participation in exhibitions, career trajectories in the arts, and their degree of social integration.

Given that artistic creation and related activities have proven to be effective tools for self-expression and personal growth among individuals with dual exceptionality, it is essential to continue developing studio programs and exploring new opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration. The integration of art, special education, and therapeutic approaches has emerged as a key factor in providing effective support for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. A holistic approach not only fosters artistic skills but also strengthens social relationships and improves overall quality of life.

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