COLLABORATION WITH ADDED VALUE FOR ALL: INCLUSIVE ARTS EDUCATION THROUGH COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND MUSEUMS (INARTdis PROJECT)

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Abstract

The aim of *INARTdis* is to promote social inclusion through art and arts education. This paper presents the Austrian results of the first survey phase with focus groups, interviews, and questionnaire surveys of teachers and museum staff as well as the results of the guided museum visits, guided interviews, and video stories. Both surveys focused on desires, experienced barriers, and perceived conditions for success for inclusive access to museums and art education. From the results of both phases of the survey, conducive and inhibiting factors as well as adaptation possibilities for the design of inclusive museums are pointed out.

Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights ensures the right of access to culture for all people as well as the right for all to be active artists themselves (United Nations, 1948). The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) additionally contains the key provisions for the political, social, and cultural participation of persons with disabilities (CRPD, 2007).

Since people with migration or disability backgrounds are partially excluded from formal political activities, the need to use non-formal participation opportunities in the context of the integration process is high (Bekaj & Antara, 2018). In the process of participation, schools and other organizations can provide learning experiences for developing practical skills of democratic participation based on collaborative learning (Lee et al., 2021). This will also be critical to the future of our democracy. Inclusive societies grant participation opportunities to potentially excluded groups, including in key areas such as education, culture, language acquisition, or employment (Huddleston, 2009). Huddleston also comments that the earlier the process of participation and inclusion begins, the greater the likelihood that people will engage constructively in the community over the long term. Engaging with culture and the arts as aspects of society can make a significant contribution as it speaks to both affect and knowledge.

Cultural Participation for All

If culture is understood not only as passive consumption, but as active participation, then the two concepts of participation and culture must also be seen as interdependent ideas. According to Hinz (2002), for successful participation of all people in the context of art and cultural institutions, both external and internal aspects must be considered. Thus, overcoming barriers to create general accessibility (physical and communicative) is considered one of the three essential conditions for success. In addition to spatial design features, this means that issues of information transfer and its accessibility are also up for review (Auer, 2007). The second area involves overcoming internal barriers by opening a wide variety of perceptual possibilities. The writing of information in easy language, the possibility of reception of the offers via different perceptual channels, and the possibility of active engagement with the exhibition objects are to be mentioned as essential elements in this area. The third aspect concerns the creation of a sense of belonging through a broad representation of the diversity of society. To show this heterogeneity in an appreciative way and to reflect it within the museum is the task and thus a condition for success of inclusive methodology (Hinz, 2002). While individual needs should be considered in the creation of inclusive cultural spaces, categorization and assignment to a specific group of people should be avoided (Folta-Schoofs, 2017). The added value of such an expanded accessibility of art and culture can be felt and experienced by all museum visitors, who also benefit from the possibility of this larger field of experience (Maaß, 2007).

Participation Barriers and Requirements (Passive Cultural Participation)

The frequencies of visits to museums, exhibitions or sights were studied by the European Union (Eurostat Culture, 2019). According to this study, cultural participation is significantly higher among younger people (16 to 29 years) than among older people. The use of cultural offerings is also higher among people with higher education as well as the urban population than among other groups. Reasons for non-participation in cultural offerings are lack of interest, followed by financial reasons or poor accessibility (Eurostat Culture, 2019). Due to a lack of meaningful statistics on the cultural participation of people with disabilities, no statement can be made for this group. The data suggests that people with migration background (differentiated by place of birth) are less likely to take advantage of cultural offerings (Eurostat Culture, 2019). Special offers such as guided tours or workshops for "migrants, refugees or people with disabilities" are only available in a few museums.

For people with disabilities, access barriers or discrimination mainly concern the use of the physical environment, buildings, transport, and communication, but also

access to information, education and culture. According to the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, culture should be increasingly understood as a common heritage of humanity or a fundamental principle thereof (UNESCO General Conference, 2001).

To counter prevailing labels and to meet the demands of the CRPD, those measures of inclusion that benefit everyone are particularly relevant. The teaching of creativity and artistic forms of expression, which sometimes overcome language barriers, contain great potential regarding social integration processes (Ziese & Gritschke, 2016). A prerequisite for improved inclusion – both regarding people with disabilities and people with a migration background – is that representatives of the respective group are involved in the design of inclusive measures (Rahn, 2016). This shows that accessibility and participation are also mutually dependent. Participation is both the consequence of accessibility and the prerequisite for its effective planning.

Cooperation between Museums and Schools

European museums are making various efforts to overcome structural barriers and address the diversity of society in general, focusing on older people or people with disabilities, migrants, or refugees in particular (Sergi, 2021). Inclusion of all people in cultural life benefits all people in diverse communities (Brown et al., 2020). The presence of all groups in images and other products of modern art is also relevant: visitors are thus encouraged to rethink preconceptions and initiate conversations about marginalized groups. When the diversity of our society is visible in collections and artworks, museums fulfil their responsibility not to create further mechanisms of exclusion (Sergi, 2021).

Participatory justice is achieved when museums and other cultural offerings are designed to enable participation in a fundamental and self-determined way. The degree of active participation can be determined by the individuals themselves but activating suggestions and encouragement can increase the incentive to participate (cf. Merkt, 2017).

Cultural Education and Personality Development (Active Cultural Participation)

In school contexts, inclusion means responding to the heterogeneity of students through specifically adapted learning opportunities, at best in interdisciplinary teams that have factual, didactic, and diagnostic competencies. A multi-perspective approach that includes music and dance as well as visual arts not only promises new spatial or self-experiences, but also enables learning that builds on physical experiences. The inclusion to be realized in the arts classroom should be viewed as

preparation for cultural participation and engagement. In any case, Loffredo (2016) highlights the great responsibility that schools have with this in a social and cultural context. For schools, collaboration with museums can provide access to the community for all and open new social spaces for marginalized groups (Sanders-Bustle, 2020). Additionally, exposure to art can be a way for young learners to express experiences of exclusion or injustice (Lee et al., 2021).

Artistic activities (i.e., visual arts, music, dance, theatre) are therefore fundamental components of the curriculum from early on. Furthermore, they are often independent of language proficiency or oral language skills and are therefore ideally suited for lived inclusion (Barton, 2015). In this context, artistic creation can be understood as a tool for the general development of the person. The development of competencies in aesthetic development, socio-emotional development, socio-cultural development, and cognitive development is promoted through creative education. Creative arts education as means to teach the whole curriculum is suitable to achieve pedagogical and professional goals (Loffredo, 2016).

Arts education contributes to general education and promotes a democratic, just, inclusive, free, and critical society. Dealing with diversity, creating democratic awareness, and developing imagination or freedom of action and thought is advanced (Barton, 2015). The goal is to make creativity as inventive, original thinking, constructive imagination, or divergent thinking accessible to all. In addition, arts education can be used to promote social cohesion and intercultural dialogue.

Results from the Survey Phases to Date

In the *INARTdis* research project, educational institutions from Austria, Germany, Northern Macedonia, Portugal, and Spain are investigating the accessibility of museums and cultural institutions (Sanahuja Gavaldà, 2019). The first phase focused on needs, opportunities, and barriers in access to art and culture from the perspective of teachers and museum staff. Central to this phase was the following research question: *What is comprehensive inclusive arts education from the perspective of teachers and stakeholders? What conditions for success in participation for all can be identified?* In this context, both the accessibility of museums for people with disabilities and the inclusive design of art education programs are addressed.

Data analysis 1: Questionnaire, Interviews and Focus Groups

The analysis on creating inclusive access to arts and culture used a mixed methods design with quantitative and qualitative survey (Kuckartz, 2014). The instruments

used were questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. The questionnaire (62 items) was composed of closed as well as open-ended questions with qualitative answers. The guide for conducting the interviews took the qualitative results of the questionnaire survey into account. The surveys were conducted in online formats: in Austria, the survey achieved a response rate of 113 respondents. In the qualitative survey, 17 interviews and three focus group discussions (21 participants) were conducted in Austria. In deductive-inductive category formation, the evaluation of all interviews was carried out according to qualitative content analysis according to Mayring (2016) using MAXQDA software.

Cultural Participation: Perceived Barriers

The most frequent responses from participants refer to spatial barriers (e.g., architectural barriers, accessibility) and lack of infrastructure as inhibiting factors for inclusive arts projects. Prejudices or uncertainty in the context of inclusion are mentioned as internal barriers. Here it is mainly ignorance and lack of awareness, fear, and lack of information that can have a negative impact. Lack of human resources, especially of specialized staff, limited financial resources, and time capacities are also mentioned as constraints for accessibility. Museums, even if they make efforts to remove barriers, are still perceived as exclusive places in Austria. This elitist touch needs to be minimized or eliminated by reducing financial barriers and raising awareness regarding equal participation.

Spatial adaptations such as increased seating, continuous guidance systems, barrier-free display case design, available audio guides in various linguistic differentiations and considerations for barrier-free text design (linguistic differentiation, font size, lighting, and contrast) represent conducive conditions.

Cultural Participation: Conditions for Success in Inclusive Creative Projects

The interviewees believe that an inclusive art project should be designed in such a way that all participants can contribute their abilities and that the project can thereby strengthen identity and self-confidence. Self-determination, openness to results, acceptance and appreciation of all participants, as well as the renunciation of performance comparisons are relevant internal factors for successful implementation. Structural conditions, such as the size of the visitor groups, the time flexibility of the offers, the possibility of active participation of all participants in the project, as well as the possibility of free experimentation and the stimulation of creative processes, are seen as essential conditions for success. Structurally, the availability of materials and infrastructure, and financial and human resources are also mentioned. Methodological-didactic considerations for the continuous

inclusion of several channels of perception represent success factors in the mediation of artistic topics.

Referring to creative processes, the participants in the discussion emphasize that everyone can learn and express themselves creatively. Art creates a space to experience oneself as self-effective, provided that not everyone has to do the same. Art makes it possible to shape and change one's own environment, which is a basic human need. In the run-up to this, there is the consideration of how the goal can be achieved, which different sensory channels need to be addressed and which technical aids need to be used. Accordingly, part of any creative process is also to be allowed to make mistakes and to reject things again. Especially collaborative products have an inclusive effect if everyone can contribute with their abilities. The motivation for participation is particularly high in artistic projects. According to the respondents, artistic activities promote identity and self-confidence.

It is central to shape the process in a self-determined way right from the start, to make the sketch oneself, to choose the material and the tools and to determine the time needed for it. A climate of trust and confidence is needed, as well as the attitude of respecting everyone as they are. It is important to have a prepared and stimulating environment where there is an abundance of materials and where the artist can choose which materials to use. The financial resources for materials also play a role in art projects, so these should be ensured on the part of the educational institution, for example, for children with a migration background. Only then does artistic education become accessible to all who want to participate.

According to the interviewees, it is desirable that learners are given more confidence. The time factor represents a barrier in several respects, and there is potential for improvement here: due to the different speed at which tasks are processed, both the timetable sequence according to the subjects and the schedules of the nursing and support staff need to be revised. The individual implementation of artistic processing should also provide for sufficient break times to address differences in the ability to concentrate.

Data Analysis 2: Interview Tours and Video Stories in the Museum

Various qualitative techniques were used to collect data at the museum. In particular, open-ended interview loops were designed for visitors (students of two inclusion classes of secondary and primary school). The goal of the interview tour was to explore what could be improved in cultural institutions and what already contributes to a positive accessible experience in the museum. The interview guide questions addressed the dimensions of "arrival and accessibility of museums", "physical accessibility", "accessibility of information", "content of the museum tour and museum", and "educational activities and interactions with professionals". The

results of these surveys were subsequently edited using video stories and presented to museum professionals within heterogeneous focus groups.

Class Composition/Type of Exhibition and Museum

The data described below refer to the accompanied museum visits of a secondary school class and a fourth-grade primary school class with students with and without disabilities.

The secondary school class visited the exhibition "From the future to the futures—what will be" at the Kunsthaus Graz (hereinafter referred to as Museum 1). The exhibition does not show a distant utopia or a possible draft of an ideal society, but outlines "What will be". This group consisted of 22 students (ten girls, one transgender boy, eleven boys; three students with first languages other than German, four students with special educational needs); the average age was 12 years.

The inclusive class of the primary level visited the exhibition "Ladies and Gentlemen" of the Neue Galerie Graz (Museum 2). "Ladies and Gentlemen" provides insights into essential social discourses from the past to the present—those of feminism, gender studies, and queer theory. The fourth grade with 18 students (ten boys, eight girls, about 10 years old, eight students with a first language other than German, and three students with special educational needs).

Results from the Museum Visits

Feedback from the open-ended guided interviews conducted with all children and teachers during and after the visit is described below. The results are analysed in terms of and mapped to Hinz's (2002) three levels model.

Level 1: General Accessibility

The dimensions of "arrival and accessibility" and "physical accessibility" correspond to the parameter of general accessibility according to Hinz (2002).

Best Practices that are Experienced as Positive

Proven and positively experienced methods, which are currently already implemented in the houses, were mentioned:

- Accessibility is provided in both museums by public transportation and on foot.
- All museums have barrier-free access, which is clearly signposted in Museum 1.

- The seating areas in front of the museums can be used to rest and to regroup as a group.
- Next to the entrance area is a restaurant that offers refreshments and light snacks.
- The routes to the restrooms are well signposted, and the houses have a barrier-free restroom for wheelchair users.
- In the exhibition in Museum 1, there were small folding chairs under the exhibits that visitors could take out themselves and rest. The exhibition in Museum 2, on the other hand, lacked seating in the exhibition rooms. There was enough space in the elevators of both museums for one person in a wheelchair and another accompanying person. Also in the exhibition rooms, both houses offered sufficient space for wheelchair users with good freedom of movement for self-determined movement.

Possibilities for Improvement

Visitors found the following areas of their visit critical and in need of improvement:

- The surfaces of the floors to reach Museum 2 make wheelchair access difficult.
- The checkrooms and the entrance to the museum (Where does the exhibition begin? What is the route through the exhibition? What is the direction of order?) were not independently locatable and usable by the students.
- In the entryway, signs or arrows to the different sections of the museum complex could help with orientation.
- Sofas or benches to sit on in the exhibit were requested
- A rest area, playground, or rooting corner for young children was requested.
- Stairs with very high steps, doors that are difficult to open with or without a knob, and doors that close very quickly, are problematic for wheelchair users to use.
- Guide systems for the blind are not consistently available for exhibits and all areas of the buildings, and in some cases stop within the building.

Level 2: Internal Barriers

Questions about "accessibility of information," the "content of museum tours and the museum," and "educational activities and interactions with professionals" correspond to the internal barriers category (Hinz, 2002).

Best Practices that are Experienced as Positive

- The website provides information about ongoing exhibitions, and the content can also be accessed via the website with the help of audio files. Short videos of the curators on the website convey the content and

- background of the exhibition. For the museums and exhibitions, sign language videos and children's audio tours of the museum are also available.
- Information texts on rooms and objects can be used by many visitors and make the exhibition more accessible.
- Videos as part of a room installation were experienced as particularly appealing and easily accessible. Very often the positive feedback was that there were objects to touch and feel in this room installation and that one could move in the middle of the artwork.
- Feedback on the quality of interaction with museum staff was exclusively positive: questions to the facilitator were encouraged and subsequently answered in a child-friendly manner.
- Museum 1 also used an iPad and various tactile models to support educational outreach. During the tour, these objects were made available for the group to touch and feel.
- It was positively emphasized that there was initially only brief information about the room installation and then the opportunity to grasp it for themselves and ask questions.
- In Museum 1, during the visit, there was an opportunity to visit the carpeted room (Space 03) with numerous sloping levels, which allows movement, romping, and sliding. This room offers visitors cushions for lounging on the floor, among other things.
- The creative activities and interactions with the content of the exhibition offered in this room at the same time were not used by the group of visitors. Thus, it might make sense to separate the movement space from the active, artistic processing and interaction.
- In Museum 2, there was an opportunity to use a studio as a creative space during the tour. This creative work (designing body contours) was very well received by the elementary school visitors.

Possibilities for Improvement

- Informational texts about the artworks and rooms were informatively written, but too long in scope. In some cases, they could not be found because the descriptions were outside the respective room.
- Some of the texts about the artworks were printed too small and placed too high.
- According to the children, the written information about the exhibition and the individual works did not add value to their understanding.
- An improvement in comprehensibility could be achieved by simpler texts, by signs, or, for example, by audio information directly at the work (The audio guide was not yet available at the time of our visit but was subsequently implemented).

- It was negatively noted that some artworks only worked in English; these works had an exclusionary effect on many and should be translated into different languages (i.e., German, Arabic, Spanish) according to the visitors.
- A wish was expressed by the students for more objects to touch and for a library with more information and books to linger on. One student said that one should be able to "touch more works to understand them better". Being able to perceive the works through multiple senses (appealing to at least two senses) would increase the absorption of the content and the concentration span.
- People with cognitive impairments are unable to grasp the content independently due to their lack of reading ability. Thus, the experience is often reduced to looking at pictures. According to the accompanying persons, realistic images are easier to grasp than abstract ones, and music and moving images are also appealing.
- In some cases, objects could only be understood and viewed from a topdown perspective, which made viewing impossible for (smaller) children and people in wheelchairs. Here, tilting elements, mirrors, stairs, or possibly height-adjustable display cases would be useful.
- Adequate time for exercise and breaks was frequently requested.
- Young visitors wanted more time to be creative on their own, as well as opportunities to work with larger formats and with paints and brushes instead of pencils.

Level 3: Creating Belonging

Creating belonging was not explicitly asked about in the interviews but was elicited through photo logs and feedback on content of museum tours and interactions with professionals.

Best practices that are Experienced as Positive

- Connection possibilities from their own world of experience with objects increased the children's interest in the exhibition: for example, a hot dog (Conchita Wurst) or the installation with stiletto heels were of great interest to the students. Works with comics and newspaper articles showing a man posing like a naked woman were also more accessible to the children.
- The objects were linked by examples from the children's everyday lives and thus explained in a way that was true to life.

Possibilities for Improvement

- The objects in the exhibition in Museum 1 showed only young, beautiful bodies, predominantly with white skin colour, hardly any diversity and no representation of people with disabilities. In Museum 2, the depiction of naked bodies triggered strong emotion in the elementary school students, which was well received and dealt with by the museum educators. The depictions, some of which addressed self-destruction or unclear gender assignments, were judged as "funny" but also "disgusting, perverse, cruel, creepy, ugly, not normal, ultra-ugly".
- The older students made specific content suggestions that are important to them and their lives as potential for improvement: an exhibit on environmental protection is desired by several students.

Suggestions for Adaptation

- Creation of spaces for movement and quiet zones
- Addressing several senses, multimodal spaces of experience
- Labelling and explanation of artworks via audio guide, stations to touch

Summary

Museums strive to meet the needs and interests of older people, people with disabilities, and migrants or refugees, as well as actively work with people from these groups in the context of art (Sergi, 2021). There are, however, still effective barriers for these groups, ranging from unsuitable infrastructure in cultural institutions, to prejudices in cultural institutions, to the lack of financial and/or human resources. The findings from the present data collection are comparable to data from the literature (Folta-Schoofs et al., 2017). Participants also cited barriers to inclusive arts education, ranging from inadequate infrastructure and prejudice in cultural institutions to lack of financial and/or human resources. These findings are also consistent with other studies (Folta-Schoofs et al., 2017).

The evaluation of the museum visits shows that for young museum visitors, other factors, such as sufficient spaces for movement, multisensory mediation of the topics and interactive, and joint elaboration of the content, are to be considered when aiming to make their visit interesting and motivating. The results show that close collaboration between museums and educational institutions is necessary: preparing visits and anticipating the needs of participants and knowledge of activities is useful for preparing students in schools to facilitate the group's access to culture. The experience of belonging correlates with the possibility of connecting to one's own life reality and addressing those issues that are relevant to children and young people. There is potential for improvement here through even stronger cooperation between schools and museums.

Published reports and further information on the project can be found at https://inartdis.eu.

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