

The Role of Special Educators in the Artistic Perspective of the Inclusive Activity of Disabled Individuals

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A special educator is a crucial person in the process of creating an artistic, educational, supporting, inclusive environment for his or her pupils and, last but not least, an environment which will provide the meaning of their creative work. Bearing in mind versatile development towards inclusive activity concerning participation in the pupils' culture, a special educator has an appropriate possibility to abandon direct activities in favour of creating artificial conditions enriching developmental impulses, the right which he or she should immediately take advantage of due to a strong probability that elements of the segregation approach might occur, in place of creating a space leading to transformation of systems of inclusive artistic education, art theory, creative stimulation, art therapy and other unconventional forms and technologies.

A skilfully organized process of creative inclusion is consistently opposed to any attitudes which differentiate artists and disabled individuals who go in for art, an artificial division of artistic work (e.g. easier or more difficult) as well as a segregative division of different spheres of artistic life, simultaneously eliminating any limitations in free participation of his or her pupils in the widely comprehended culture and art. The process organized in this manner no longer involves any privileged individuals and groups, inequalities in the access to cultural goods and services, monopolization of art and culture, biased limiting pupils' special needs and making them impossible to be satisfied.

A special educator, in the perspective of inclusive artistic activity of disabled pupils, is an unprejudiced person, free from universally dominating stereotypes of thinking, and at the same time a deep believer into the idea of creating equal creative opportunities of the discussed group of pupils. He or she effectively protects his or her pupils so that they will have an active right to participation in a shaped creative process, according to universal rights in force and rules of the life of an artistic community. His or her activities are only an area where plans are fulfilled, though he or she is aware of the

need to respect the accepted program, to prepare and select methods, forms, manners of affecting any conditions which come up.

The figure of a special educator is of key importance in artistic stimulation towards social inclusion of disabled individuals. His or her adequate, matter-of-fact and justified understanding of his or her role outlines strategic horizons of development of pupils in the process of artistic stimulation, and also it strengthens in him or her the modality of "I want and I can", which is so desirable for creativity and the phenomenon of cooperation. A special educator is a person who has influence on the process of creation around pupils of various environments, including: artistic, educational, supporting, inclusive environments and, last but not least, those who give meaning to their creative work. Bearing in mind versatile development towards inclusive activity as regards participation in the culture of pupils, a special educator has an appropriate possibility to renounce from direct actions in favour of creating artificial conditions enriching developmental impulses (the rights which he or she should immediately take advantage of due to a strong tendency that elements of the segregative approach might occur) instead of creating a space leading to the transformation of systems of artistic inclusive education, the theory of art, creative stimulation, art therapy and other unconventional forms and techniques. It should be a space in which each individuality is bound to have an opportunity of finding a proper climate for his or her own, personal supplementation, artistic development, creative exultations and experiences (regardless of the kind of disability). The objective of creative inclusion, with prominent collaboration of educators, is to, in a justified way, enable the artistic circles and the whole community to participate in the act of joint surrender to the process of creative maturation as well as noticing on its way variety appearing in culture and art and diversification in the categories of normalcy, and not as a social problem (Ploch, 2009a). The special educator has also a possibility, while provoking certain expected attitudes of pupils, to involve them in tasks which actively stimulate their artistic development. Without enforcing prepared and binding patterns of functioning in the artistic world, he or she can arrange situations allowing pupils to gain experience bringing them essential knowledge as regards artistic and creative activities with which they have a chance to get into relations on an everyday basis. He or she can also provoke pupils to go beyond their notion of what is possible, desirable, necessary, good, beautiful, aesthetic, by placing them in direct situations of solving tasks (problems) and through arranging their interaction with society and artistic circles. However, success of the above mentioned expectations depends considerably on a special educator's individual adequacy towards each pupil, whether an artist or a creator. With full conviction, that adequacy will be a result of deep understanding of

developmental possibilities of pupils and the educator's sensitivity to expressions of their creative activity, creativity and creative commitment. It depends on the special educator whether the opportunities which nature gave pupils or which were successfully instilled in the family, will remain, through properly organized operations of inclusion and educational activity - wasted or used. The task character of the educational agency represented by the educator, spreading artistic activity of disabled individuals, strengthening their modality "I want and I can", has a chance to succeed only with consistent, systematic and skilful (adequate, based on solid specialist knowledge on current psychophysical abilities of pupils) his or her providing inclusive tasks and individually diversified cooperation with pupils. Therefore, the basis of those joint activities should be close relations of educators and pupils resulting from authentic creative meetings. Such activity is supposed to shape and set directions of further development of the active attitude open for something new, unusual and original in the face of the world of art and culture (on a certain stage apart from the obtained artistic level). Consequently, in the process of creative inclusive activity pupils experience themselves in the categories of subjectivity and causativity, systematically getting mature confident in their abilities and creative potential. Simultaneously this process actively supports the development of contacts, together with eliminating all barriers in order to strengthen the emotional and identity bonds of pupils with the educator, pupils among one another, and, last but not least, with the whole cultural environment. The creative inclusion process, skilfully arranged in this way by the educator, consistently opposes to attitudes which diversify artists and disabled individuals involved in art, an artificial division of artistic work (e.g. easier or more difficult work) and segregative division of different spheres of artistic life, simultaneously eliminating limitations in free participation of his or her pupils in the widely comprehended culture and art. The process organized in this way no longer involves privileged individuals and groups, inequalities in access to goods and services of culture, monopolisation of art and culture, biased limiting making it impossible to satisfy pupils' special needs (Ploch, 2009b).

In these relationships, knowing the educator as a person is also very important for pupils, also due to the fact that it enables one to recognize clear rules which accompany the process of taking an active artistic and creative activity. Simultaneously it creates an opportunity to experience a relative sense of security as well as acceptance essential for creating the atmosphere of freedom of creative liberation, creativity, reproductive activities, artistic research. On the other hand, knowing pupils as individuals who constitute a potential for activities in culture and art provides the educator with an opportunity to create individual conditions which support, compensate

and actuate his or her pupils' potential and cause that their creative predispositions form the main pillar of development as well as compensatory and motivational activities.

The inclusive artistic activity of pupils, with key support from the educator is not limited only to simple influencing the environment, including creative influence (e.g. artistic education, artetherapy). The main issue here is primarily to make pupils, thanks to the educator's help, be able to adapt to specially arranged conditions and aids of the cultural environment together with the possibility of getting fully familiarized with forms of creative attitudes and tasks resulting from the content acknowledged in a specified group of artistic, creational, both creative and reproductive values and objectives - apart from psychophysical, social and environmental limitations (Ploch, 2009b).

The idea of inclusive artistic activity, supported with the leading part of the special educator, defines therefore the agency involved in propagation of culture of disabled individuals as:

- a place of meeting educational promotion as well as artistic values in the participants' lives;
- a place of active stimulation of the participants which supports their versatile possibilities. Potentials, skills, interests;
- a place of undisturbed boosting the participants self-esteem and influencing the stimulation of their creative ambitions;
- a place of breaking the psychological and mental barriers of social environments, including the creative ones;
- a place of self-realisation and creative activity in which the participants are perceived from the angle of their own possibilities, talents, interests but not their limitations;
- a place in which usual stereotypes of the image and the value of the art created by disabled individuals are broken, annihilated and eliminated.

Making an attempt to formulate the special educator's tasks concerning the issue of defining the rules of meetings with pupils in the process of their inclusive artistic activity, it should be marked that the manner in which he or she will fulfil them depends on the psychological-pedagogic and artistic-creative conception having been prepared and accepted by him or her earlier. The educator's tasks will also result directly from the ideology of artistic education accepted by the culture agency which he or she represents and which is based on a determined conception of development of all disabled participants and the role resulting from it.

One can therefore agree that the conception of socially inclusive artistic creativity of the disabled will define the vision of meetings of the special educator as an animator ensuring peaceful and rich in impulses of own environments and external, including the artistic ones which feed that process. Consequently the educator is required

to abandon direct educational and inspiring influences of the agency itself as far as possible in favour of arranging secure, tolerant, friendly and accepting artistically inclusive environment in which pupils will be able to develop freely and get involved creatively. Simultaneously the educator takes measures so as to guarantee proper conditions in order to satisfy various needs of participants of artistic activities, maintaining a proper distance and the character based on partnership of meetings. The educator's task is consequently, apart from health, psychical, social and living, existential and creative care, providing the participants with absolute artistic license in performing tasks favouring development of their natural potential of talents and skills simultaneously providing any operations a favourable internal climate of meetings as well as caring for a desirable turnover of experienced artistic situations. Skills, knowledge and experience acquired in this way are not supposed to be a means in themselves, but are to serve as a means in which to obtain the sense of belonging, the harmony of integration, internal consciousness of the causative feeling and the feeling of personal happiness. When creating an inclusive artistic environment the educator is primarily obliged to provide for expression of an internal standard of pupils' creative (artistic) abilities, and then provide them with appropriate support in their realization of their individual achievements, potentials and desires. In each case the educator must thoroughly recognize pupils' strong points, inspire situations of establishing and their getting into direct and close relationships with others, permitting one to notice the symptoms of harmony, the specificity of the secrets of creative activities, spiritual unity, a feeling of fulfilment and satisfaction, joy, happiness and mental soundness. It means that the basis of educator's contacts with pupils is creative commitment, authenticity, showing warmth and unconditional acceptance of creative activities.

Creative artistic inclusion of disabled individuals assumes that the activity level in the environment will increase together with gaining experience. Consequently, the social environment, including the artistic one, is required to actively stimulate the development of this group of pupils. Since the development of stimulation and adaptation to the environment occurs as a result of active creative activities stimulated by the arrangement of tasks, situations, experiences, the artistic circles must provide pupils with rules, norms, rights, incentives, problems of technical character which are able to be solved and authentic. That intervention of the environment based on the analysis of the relations of specific (characteristic) structures in pupils' acquisition of experiences leads to the expected structures of behaviour and then it constructs specified situations of the design of artistic functioning optimal for each individuality adequately to them.

The educator who regularly designs those experiences should therefore:

1. concentrate his or her attention on manners and styles of solving individual artistic tasks of pupils, that is to diagnose individually the current stage of creative development, creativity, ingeniousness, interpretation;
2. fit the creative (artistic) stimulation into the stage corresponding to individual psychophysical possibilities of pupils, that is to imitate situations in which the style and the manner of fulfilment of tasks will require pupils to undertake an attempt of raising by one stage higher from the present one;
3. accompany the formation of valuable bonds among pupils concerning creative situations, creativity and strengthening artistic joint activities in favour of own expectations and those of the creative environment;
4. initiate creative and artistic situations in relation to which pupils will become active, and whose assimilative reaction to an incentive situation will be associated with naturalness, interest, joy and challenge.

The role of a special educator in the perspective of inclusive artistic stimulation of disabled individuals is to come down to organization of this process in its unlimited character which does not concentrate only to the work of specified culture and art agencies, does not determine any age limits, the duration and the place of realization. Thanks to the commitment, professionalism and additional support of educators creative education and inclusive activity will be characterized by its justified complexity, procesuality, universality, many-sidedness, graduality, individualisation, relativism, authenticity and voluntariness of the participation. Consequently, a special educator's professional conduct will:

- consolidate and propagate the current artistic culture of disabled individuals;
- trigger possibilities and artistic and creative abilities with a possibility of using them in later, adult life;
- prepare for re-adaptive skills connected with ongoing change in culture and art;
- prepare for artistic and creative independence with a possibility of developing the level of creative and reproductive activity;
- develop skills of communication activity at present and in later adult life of the culture and art of the environment;
- enrich and motivate for undertaking regular activities concerning stimulation and development of creative and reproductive motivation;

- teach how to get mature enough for criticism, retaining of creative individualism, the objectivism of assessment, distance and the joy of reception of art;
- consolidate skills of using signals, processes and phenomena from nature (Ploch, 2009b).

In the contemporary times the special educator faces another important task in the process of continuation of inclusive artistic stimulation of artistically talented disabled individuals. It seems that all the educator's activity should focus in this instance on systematic getting the pupils accustomed with the mechanism of the process of active artistic and creative stimulation. As a result, his activity will finally create numerous opportunities to shape the participants' characters, among other things such features as ease of concentration on artistic or creative tasks, to improve the skill of quick adaptation to changing conditions, the skill of self-assessment, to shape one's vital resource (Ploch, 2010). Abilities and skills acquired in this way will certainly be successfully used afterwards in other areas of life, not necessarily connected with art.

Socially inclusive artistic activity can be developed effectively by the educator in daily task situations, like other skills and competences. It is important, however, that he or she himself or herself persists in the belief about the benefit from previous education, upbringing, creating and promoting artistic culture concerning pupils' creative activities. So, pupils' artistic activity, except for educational, therapeutic and socializing values, has an undeniable value from the perspective of the process of social inclusion. It is so because it is a key form which allows pupils to familiarize themselves with art also from the angle of practical performance workshop, so it allows deeper penetration into the specificity of the structure of the artistic (creative) process and into social values and expression possibilities of the undertaken activities. Due to this reason special educators should follow specified rules which can appear very helpful in developing this form of pupils' activity.

It seems that it an important principle to support all expressions of pupils' creative and artistic activity and then stimulate, support and enable their frequency of presentation in the environment. It is advisable to select the contents, forms and methods of artistic stimulation so that they will refer to interests, possibilities, skills and the psychophysical efficiency of pupils. Such ideas, forms and methods will certainly be cognitively attractive and motivating for pupils. In that initial period of stimulation (and not only) it becomes very important that it is the educator who perceives revealed ideas, wishes and manifestations of pupils' initiative and whatever is creative in them. In the following stage the educator should prompt

pupils to undertake initiatives in the area of artistic and creative activities in an alternative manner. In the conditions of authenticity, the divergent character and variety it seems necessary for the educator to show systematically the possibility, manners and stage activities of the realization of set tasks, enabling direct experiencing of satisfaction, fulfilment and usefulness. The level of the execution of tasks should have a varied character with the tendency of gradation of the scale of difficulty in accordance with gaining positive experiences by pupils. Therefore these activities should lead to developing autonomous cognitive motivation in pupils, strengthening the artistic process - socially inclusive creative stimulation.

The above mentioned course of procedure can be treated as an attempt of exemplification of the general pattern of inclusive artistic stimulation of disabled pupils in the surrounding world improved by the educator. The first stage in it will be connected with the diagnosis of previous skills, preferences, interests and inclinations of pupils. This stage ought to be treated as a point of departure, necessary in the strategy of stimulating activities. It is an essential effort for constructing adequate socially inclusive tasks. The second stage seems to be individualisation of providing pupils with the wealth of experiences of proposals, designs, patterns, solutions (originating from one's own environment or / and the external environment). The presented proposals should directly refer to tasks which are currently set for pupils, situations or problems of artistic and creative character. Another stage seems to be presentation of achievements in the presence of the educator, when first corrections and assessments are made, and assistance is to be provided (tips, proposals, additional exercises, forms of awards, joint analysis). A significant condition inherently accompanying the realization of the discussed process of conduct also appears the rule of the special educator's personal creation.

Constant pedagogic support in the process of inclusive artistic stimulation of disabled individuals should also involve specified personality traits and attitudes of pupils which favour undertaking artistic and creative activity. It can be indicated that such traits include first of all readiness to undertake innovative activities, readiness to overcome difficult, surprising and unforeseen situations, specified motivation for group activities and sensitivity to problems of general and artistic character. Similar trend is indicated by the proposal of pro-creative didactics by W. Andrukowicz [1999]. This author proposes principles favouring the process of creation (i.e. subsidiarity, self-determination, self-creation, stimulating one's abilities) and considers the role of the kind of communication in inclusion of pupils to the outside world and strategies of their education of creative and dynamic character (he includes in them

mainly transgression and the prospective strategy) (Andrukowicz, 1999).

In a crucially realized course of pedagogic procedure the most important items are simultaneously elements of arousing in pupils the feeling of their own value, ability, creating artistic unity, an environment of harmonious symbiosis, learning, development and artistic relations. Other important items are also individual problems which in the conditions of common artistic activity are to be solved by an educator. Therefore the educator is also to fulfil such assignments as:

- creating, in accordance with individual conditions, various possibilities which will help the pupils to expose their talents, abilities, skills, interests and developing and shaping them in the atmosphere of tolerance and a creative climate (conditions of creation);
- initiating conditions so that creative and artistic activities, creativities, experiences of creative activity were realized in a constant, uniform and systematic cycle;
- constructing projects and one's own methods in which, as far it is only possible, undeveloped skills and abilities will have an opportunity of harmonious development, hindered chances will revive again, the wasted will become the current again;
- implementing the atmosphere and conditions of artistic space in which pupils will be able to take over specified responsibility as their own, and at the same time their shared everyday lives, simultaneously enriching their artistic workshop;
- promoting accepted artistic traditions as regards cherishing them with simultaneous joint quest for new challenges and creative tasks;
- providing the pupils with technical requirements while supporting the development of their artistic ability and activities in crafts and techniques (e.g. dancing, singing, playing an instrument) thus helping to preserve their artistic identity;
- integrating the community of artistically talented disabled individuals in which, in the atmosphere of tolerance, respect and recognition they will be able to contact with one another and learn one from one another;
- promoting the widely comprehended positive change of a disabled artist and his or her environments, supported with free creative development deprived of acts segregation, barriers, isolation, social exclusion.

The special educator in the perspective of inclusive artistic activity of disabled pupils must therefore be a person deprived of prejudices, free from universally prevailing thinking stereotypes, and, at the same time, a deep believer in the idea of creating equal opportunities

for the discussed group of pupils. It is due to him or her that the participants of artistic activity have, on equal and democratic rights, access to active participation in a shaped creative process, according to the universally binding laws and rules of life of an artistic community. Thanks to him or her the conducted creatively stimulating activities are only an area of realization of intentions, though he or she realizes the need to respect the accepted schedule, preparation and selection of methods, forms, the manner of influencing on the conditions which appear. Activities proposed by the educator are exceptionally attractive and interesting for pupils because attending them is completely optional and free of any repressions. In compliance with the right to respect one's individual development and the right of expression of one's own individuality, all endeavour undertaken by the leading person are supposed to support a versatile artistic, creative and reproductive development of pupils in an optimal manner. Careful transfer performed by the committed educator to the ground of artistic stimulation the idea of emancipation understood as becoming independent from somebody's authority (e.g. parents, schools, agencies) and achieving the state of freedom is supposed to, along with success, accelerate verification of the selected ideas, solutions, artistic creation, and, what is the most important, to effectively even out undeniable opportunities of creative social inclusion of artistically talented disabled individuals on different levels of their stimulation.

Examples of the role of a special educator in inclusive artistic stimulation by means of art can be multiplied, the problem is in the fact that, in order that he or she becomes creative in this domain, and he or she sometimes has at his or her disposal systematic enlargement of his or her own workspace, in order that he or she does not copy universally widespread patterns and remember that the condition of creative activity of pupils is properly prepared and realized organization in a constructive relationship of communication with the environment in feedback.

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