
This is the **accepted version** of the journal article:

Miquel, Ester; Sanahuja Gavalda, José María; Morón, Mar. «Inclusive artistic space : a professional development environment based on collaboration between schools and artistic institutions». *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, DOI 10.1108/JPCC-06-2024-0103

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Inclusive Artistic Space: A Professional Development Environment Based on Collaboration Between Schools and Artistic Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Purpose

This study, part of an international effort to bring art and culture closer to everyone, aims to analyse interprofessional collaboration between schools and artistic institutions in the development of Inclusive Artistic Spaces. It focuses on identifying opportunities for professional development and student learning.

Design/methodology/approach

From the theoretical framework of collaboration and professional development, this study follows a qualitative case study design. It analyses the design, implementation, and evaluation of three inclusive artistic projects in Barcelona. An interpretive qualitative methodology is used to collect and analyse data from 30 professionals from artistic institutions and schools, and 85 students. Data were obtained through video recordings, field notes, and group and individual interviews.

Findings

The results demonstrated a strengthening and stimulation of interprofessional collaboration networks, providing the community with new learning spaces that are more open, flexible and inclusive. Furthermore, sharing knowledge and methodological strategies not only promotes professional development but also positively impacts students' outcomes. Inclusive Artistic Spaces serve as a crucial platform for this purpose, offering an environment where artistic expression and cultural engagement intersect with educational goals.

Practical implications

The findings have two clear practical implications: firstly, to build inclusive artistic spaces in the community based on collaboration between schools and artistic institutions; and secondly, to generate a reference framework for professional development among different types of community institutions.

Originality/value

This paper adopts a practice theory approach to study interprofessional collaboration between schools and artistic institutions, giving voice not only to professionals but also to students.

Keywords

Professional development, Collaboration, Inclusive education, Artistic education

"... we had to reach an agreement, starting to think about how to configure an artistic space where all voices were represented. This project had to be built and developed gradually by everyone together. And this was a complete challenge."

Teresa González, MNAC Accessibility Technique

INTRODUCTION

This article, part of the results of international research aimed at making art and culture accessible to everyone, intends to explore the collaboration between regular and special schools and artistic institutions in the building of Inclusive Artistic Spaces (IAS). It aims to uncover opportunities for professional development and for learning students (without and with disability) through interaction within these spaces.

In response to contemporary social changes, with a more diverse society where different cultures and personal abilities are welcomed, international organisations have long addressed the importance of inclusive education to achieve a more equitable and cohesive society (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2014). Despite the availability of various research studies providing practical evidence on how to achieve this (Anthoula, 2020), not only in Europe but globally, not all stakeholders fully understand the values that inclusion represents, the benefits it can bring to the entire population, the ways it can be implemented, and the systemic changes required.

In one of its recent reports, the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2022b) emphasises the necessity of continuous professional development for educators to enhance their competencies in inclusive education. Advocate for a

collaborative approach by creating collaborative classrooms in every way. Strategies such as cooperative learning among students, or co-teaching, an effective practice of inclusion that promotes spaces for professional reflection for teachers, are reaffirmed (Duran & Miquel, 2019). And more specifically, reciprocal peer observation, a mechanism that helps to identify professional learning goals (Miquel et al., 2024).

In collaborative practices all education professionals, including teachers, school leaders, support staff, and educators from other cultural and social institutions, engage in joint professional learning. They must value differences, believe in collaboration, and commit to providing educational opportunities to all students (Ainscow et al., 2020). In this regard, UNESCO (2020) proposes various actions that should be undertaken, one of which is to create networks and involve the community to work collaboratively across different institutions and their professionals.

Moreover, the same European Agency, in another report (2022a), describes how collaborative practices between regular and special education schools can foster inclusive environments. Specialised schools can serve as resource hubs, providing expertise and support to regular schools, while these relationships help to integrate the experiences of individuals with special educational needs into the broader community, making it more open and responsive to everyone's needs.

Finally, to progress towards a more inclusive society, it is essential to listen to the voices of the students themselves (Ainscow & Messiou, 2017; Li et al., 2022). Engaging students in the discourse on inclusion not only empowers them but also provides valuable insights into their experiences and needs, contributing to more effective and responsive educational practices.

Artistic institutions, as integral components of the cultural, educational, and social life of the community, have been collaborating with schools for years, focusing on the creative process rather than merely contemplating the result (Imms et al., 2011; Raaijmakers et al., 2021). Within this creative process, it has been demonstrated that the combination of diverse perspectives and professional skills allows for the development of more effective and personalised methodological strategies that better respond to the diversity of students.

Through collaboration with schools, artistic institutions can obtain significant benefits. This interaction helps strengthen their educational mission, increases their visibility and community engagement, and creates new spaces and opportunities for interaction and learning (Gigerl et al., 2022; Sanahuja-Gavaldà et al., 2022). When these institutions move beyond simple participation, a collaborative knowledge-building process takes place between the students and the institutions within their community, adopting a school-community collaboration approach (Hands, 2023c; Hausburg, 2020).

By creating these *social learning spaces*, following Wenger-Trayner et al. (2014), it therefore allows to create environments where individuals can learn together through social interaction and collaboration.

Aligned with the approach of Theory of Practice, refined and extended to different contexts since its origins (Caldwell, 2012), the agency of individuals is emphasized. Actors can influence social and cultural structures through their shared and meaningful practices in specific contexts. Principles such as the management of shared resources, the role of emotions and relationships of trust between actors, and the importance of a common vision can improve collaborations between teachers, students and institutions.

The collaboration between teachers and professionals (educators and technicians) from artistic institutions can offer numerous benefits for both students and the professionals involved (Baker, 2013; Robinson, 2013; Scott & Twyman, 2018):

1) Promoting a more personalised education: Education in the arts helps identify and develop individual talents among students. Collaboration enables a more personalised education, addressing the specific needs and interests of each student, fostering their personal and academic growth, and providing a broad vision of education within inclusive environments.

2) Access to unique resources and experiences: Artistic institutions often possess resources not available in schools, such as exhibitions, original artworks, performances, and workshops with professional artists. This collaboration can provide students with unique experiences that enrich their learning, while also allowing teachers to expand their networks with professionals in the artistic field.

3) Opportunities for interdisciplinary learning: Students can see the connections between different areas of knowledge. For example, a project integrating art and science can help students understand scientific concepts through artistic expressions (Marshall, 2016). Concurrently, professionals learn methodologies beyond their discipline, thereby fostering education through the arts (Alvarez et al., 2021; Bamford, 2009).

4) Development of social and emotional skills: Artistic projects often involve teamwork, where students learn to collaborate and respect others' ideas. Additionally, the arts can be a powerful tool for emotional development, helping students express and manage their emotions, especially for students with disabilities (Casciano, 2019). This is also an opportunity for the professionals involved, as they must develop these skills to advance

towards more inclusive education (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2022b).

5) Enhancement of motivation and interest: Artistic activities are often highly motivating for students, as they allow for personal expression and active participation. Working from this perspective can increase students' interest in learning and make them feel more engaged in their educational process.

6) Deepening of cultural knowledge: Collaborating with artistic institutions provides access to a variety of art forms and different cultures. This not only broadens cultural knowledge but also promotes tolerance and acceptance of diversity.

However, achieving all these benefits is not immediate, as collaboration between schools and artistic institutions can face several barriers that may hinder the effectiveness and impact of their joint efforts. The most significant barriers include (Gigerl et al., 2022; Hands, 2023a; Sanahuja-Gavaldà et al., 2021):

1) Infrastructure and resource limitations: Many institutions lack the necessary infrastructure and resources to support collaborative projects. This includes physical spaces that are accessible to all participants, as well as technological resources and funding for programs.

2) Human resources and training: There is often a shortage of trained professionals who can effectively manage and implement collaborative projects. Additionally, existing staff may not have the necessary training in inclusive and participatory methodologies, which are crucial for successful collaboration (Sanahuja-Gavaldà et al., 2016).

3) Accessibility and inclusivity issues: Ensuring that collaborative projects are inclusive and accessible to all participants is a major challenge. This involves not only physical accessibility but also ensuring that programs are designed to be inclusive of diverse needs, such as those related to sensory and cognitive abilities.

4) Cultural and normative barriers: Cultural differences and varying expectations between institutions can lead to misunderstandings and conflict. This is particularly true in contexts where there is a lack of tradition or experience in collaboration, and where competitive rather than cooperative mindsets prevail.

5) Organisational and environmental barriers: Poor organisational development and environmental factors can also pose significant challenges. For example, differences in institutional goals, bureaucratic processes, and lack of alignment in policies can create friction and reduce the effectiveness of collaborations.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

The study presented here is part of the European Erasmus+ project INARTdis (*Fostering social inclusion for all through artistic education: Developing support for students with disabilities*)¹, which aimed to bring art and culture closer to people with disabilities in inclusive contexts through the development of supports for social inclusion. The research was organised into four phases: 1) Detection of training needs related to art and inclusion among professionals in artistic institutions and schools. 2) Identification of the level of inclusivity of artistic institutions based on the perspectives of professionals and students. 3) Implementation of a training course on art and inclusion for

¹ <https://inartdis.org/>

professionals from both types of institutions. 4) Design, implementation, and evaluation of inclusive artistic projects.

The creation of an Inclusive Artistic Space (IAS)

The comprehensive analysis of the entire research (Gigerl et al., 2022) demonstrates how each phase contributed fundamental elements to the construction of IAS (see Table 1).

Table 1. Main actions and findings, and consequences of each phase of the global research.

PHASE	ACTIONS / FINDINGS	CONSEQUENCE
1	Misconceptions and a lack of information about inclusion and artistic education were identified, along with how to best utilise the expertise of professionals from the other institution.	Different professionals need to share a similar understanding of educational and social inclusion, as well as the content and methodologies of artistic education. They must advance in knowledge and attitudes within their respective institutions through interprofessional collaboration.
2	Professionals and students shared their views on the development of inclusion in artistic institutions, identifying areas for improvement.	Key aspects of an inclusive artistic institution were identified: accessibility (physical, cognitive, sensory); relevance to students' interests and everyday contexts; and the interrelation and collaboration between educational and artistic professionals in the creation of project, among others.
3	The gaps identified in previous phases were transformed into training opportunities. Joint sessions were held with all professionals participating together.	Experiences were shared, creating favourable conditions for building interprofessional collaboration. To prepare for the next phase, agreements were reached, and decisions were made, involving both educational and artistic institutions as co-leaders of the projects.
4	The design, implementation, and	Every project member was able to openly express their views, fostering mutual

	evaluation of each project were based on collaboration among all participants, including professionals from different institutions (artistic and educational) and students.	respect and appreciation for different contributions. The final product reflected the positive interdependence developed among all participants.
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Source: Authors' own creation.

The inclusive artistic project: the main axis of each IAS

In this paper, we will analyse the fourth phase of the overall research (design, implementation, and evaluation of an inclusive artistic project) in more detail.

One of the initial challenges was to agree on a definition of what we understood by inclusive artistic projects and how their development could generate various IAS. These projects aim to enhance artistic expression, artistic sensitivity, and social inclusion through art and artistic education. They are based on a fundamental premise: the collaborative participation of professionals and students (with and without disabilities) in their design, implementation, and evaluation. These are projects to relate with ourselves, with others and with the world and its matter (Kara et al., 2021). Methodologically, these projects 1) seek experiential, inquiry-based, and creative learning both within and outside educational settings and artistic institutions; 2) are based on accessible, flexible, and dialogic practices, where participants feel free and unjudged; and 3) emphasise processes, with the educator acting as a guide-accompanying.

As partners of the European Erasmus+ INARTdis research, three inclusive artistic projects were carried out in Barcelona. Project A: “We (re)invent ourselves through fashion” (see

IMAGE 1). Project B: “The emotions. How we express them and how we hide them” (see IMAGE 2). And Project C: “Get excited by sharing” (see IMAGE 3). All of them share a common theme chosen by the participants: interpersonal relationships, affections, and emotions. The main objective of the projects was to foster positive relationships in the face of affective, sexual, and gender diversity. Specific objectives included identifying healthy social relationships in the context of diversity, understanding affective, sexual, and gender diversity through artworks, and expressing this diversity through individual and collective artistic languages.

Once described the research context and specifically the location of IAS in the fourth phase, we formulate the following research questions:

1. Are opportunities for professional development generated in an Inclusive Artistic Space?
2. Are learning opportunities generated for students in an Inclusive Artistic Space?

METHODOLOGY

From the theoretical framework of collaboration and professional development, this study follows an interpretative methodology through a qualitative case study design (Creswell, & Poth, 2016). Data were collected and analysed from professionals in artistic institutions, schools, and students with and without disabilities using purposive sampling.

Each project specifically involved the participation of at least one primary or secondary school, an institution or association for special education and an artistic institution.

Methodologically, two main approaches can be highlighted. On one hand, researchers kept a detailed record of the entire process of designing, implementing and evaluation the projects. Field diaries, interviews, photographs, and videos were used for this purpose. On the other hand, a variety of visual and creative techniques were applied with all participants (children, adolescents, and adults, both with and without intellectual disabilities) to explore their personal experiences and shape each project.

Each co-author of the article was involved in one of the projects, as a guide-supporter and facilitator of the funded resources that the research provided.

Participants

A total of 85 students from primary, secondary, and special education schools participated in the three projects. Additionally, 30 professionals from artistic institutions (15) and schools (15) participated. The professionals from the artistic institutions included educators (10) and managers from the education departments of their institutions (5). For the school professionals, each project included a specialist art education teacher. The selection of this sample was non-probabilistic and purposive (see Table 2). There are no significant differences relative to race or socioeconomic level. The schools and artistic institutions are in an urban environment and all the professionals had participated directly or indirectly in the third phase of the research, the training course.

Table 2. Institutions, professionals and students who participated in the three inclusive artistic projects.

	Artistic institutions		Schools		
Project	Type	Staff	Type	Staff	Students

Project A:	1 Design Museum	4	1 secondary school 2 special schools	4	19
Project B	1 Art Museum 1 Theatre	6	1 secondary school 1 special school	6	33
Project C	1 Art Museum 1 Dance house	5	1 primary school 1 special school	5	33
Total	5	15	7	15	85

Source: Authors' own creation.

Phases, instruments, and procedure

The three inclusive artistic projects were developed in three phases: design, implementation, and evaluation, from September 2022 to June 2023.

Design Phase (September 2022 - February 2023).

Each project was formed by a working group made up of professionals from the artistic and educational institutions, two students with and without disabilities and two university researchers. We were keen to ensure that the voices of all those involved were present from the start of the project.

There were three main challenges in the project design: 1) identifying barriers to learning and student participation in the art institutions. Schools elaborated a document on some methodological aspects related to the barriers faced by their students, which they shared with the professionals of the art institutions. 2) Choosing artworks that reflected the students' motivations and interests. Considering the art institutions involved and the curricula of the schools, the professionals from the art institutions offered different artworks that were selected by the students with and without disabilities. And 3) Planning the sessions, adapting them to the dynamics of the

institutions, since each project had to be implemented both in the schools and in the artistic localization.

Learning goals and content, number of sessions, scheduling, type of activities, spaces and materials required, and the professionals involved were specified, but it was a plan as flexible as possible to promote learning through discovery by the students.

Approximately 5-6 sessions of 90 minutes each were utilized for the design, during which field notes were taken. At the end of each session, a brief evaluation group interview was conducted. All sessions and group interviews were recorded on video.

Implementation Phase (February 2023 - June 2023).

The implementation of each project took place over 6-7 face-to-face sessions, each lasting 3 hours. The projects began by organizing some activities to get to know each other better and strengthen social relations between groups of students. Subsequently, the students were presented with and allowed to experience some contributions that, according to each project, each artistic institution could offer.

Next, in each session, time was dedicated to explaining the activities to be carried out, even though the teachers had already made a first presentation to the students. Afterwards, they devoted most of their time to experimentation and artistic creation with the guidance and modeling of professionals from artistic institutions and the support of teachers. At the end of each session, spaces for dialogue and reflection were established where both professionals and students shared their impressions of the activities carried out and improvements were proposed for the next session.

Some sessions were held in schools, while others took place in artistic institutions, and all were recorded on video. Field notes were also taken for each implemented session.

Evaluation Phase (June 2023).

The implementation of each project was accompanied by a continuous evaluation process. The level of satisfaction, the participation of all, the transfer of learning and the removal of barriers to learning and participation had been considered.

In June 2023, a joint evaluation session involving all professionals from the three projects and four students with and without disabilities was held. This group interview was also recorded on video.

The interviews aimed to gather information on the collaboration processes of professionals and students according to the dynamics of each activity conducted, relating to expectations, barriers, and learning opportunities.

Finally, video recordings were used to complement and expand the information contained in the field notes.

Data analysis: categories

The qualitative analysis of the data collected from interviews, field notes, and video recordings was conducted using discourse analysis techniques through the development of a hermeneutic matrix. The dimensions and categories followed a mixed process, both deductive and inductive. The dimensions were created from the theoretical framework presented above, especially for the "professional development" dimension. The result of a research partnership between Arts Victoria and the Department of Education and

Early Childhood Development (Imms et al., 2011), in different communities of practice in the state of Victoria (Australia), provides us with several categories that describe the impact of the researched programs on students. (see Table 3)

Category coding was carried out using NVivo software (v1.5). To ensure the quality of the analysis, inter-rater reliability verification was conducted. Two independent researchers assigned each relevant data segment to a category. The inter-rater agreement was 86%, with disagreements resolved through discussion.

Table 3. The dimensions and categories related to the research questions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	DIMENSIONS	CATEGORIES
Are opportunities for professional development generated in an inclusive artistic space?	a. Professional development	1.a. knowledge linking art and inclusion 2.a. inclusive methodologies 3.a. communication and collaboration strategies 4.a. critical self-reflection of professional development 5.a. the practitioner as guide-supporter
Are learning opportunities generated for students in an inclusive artistic space?	b. Student learning	1.b. competences in social relationships 2.b. artistic skills 3.b. decision-making (self-determination competencies) 4.b positive attitudes towards diversity

Source: Authors' own creation.

Ethical considerations

This research adhered to the standards outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki regarding ethics in research. Participants in the project were kept anonymous, and data were

treated confidentially in accordance with current regulations. Participants were continuously informed about the procedures to be followed, and their participation in data collection using various instruments was preceded by their signing a consent form. This form specified the project objectives and detailed all significant elements related to current research ethics regulations. This study received favorable evaluation from the Ethical Committee on Animal and Human Experimentation (CEEAH) of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, reference number CEEAH-5990.

RESULTS

The results are presented in two sections corresponding to the analytical dimensions established in relation to the two research questions. Each section includes information extracted from the instruments: interviews (I) and field notes complemented by video recordings (FN), collected at different project phases.

Five Opportunities for Professional Development in an Inclusive Artistic Space

1. Throughout the project's different phases, professionals **built knowledge that links art and inclusion**. They realize that artistic projects facilitate interaction among people, helping them understand each other better, recognize and value differences, and dismantle myths and prejudices about specific characteristics.

"Art benefits the person creating it the most because it is a very personal process and enriches them both individually and as a group; it helps to know oneself better, to recognize and value differences." (I2B-artistic staff)

The role of artistic institutions in relation to guaranteeing everyone's right to participate in culture, preventing part of the population from remaining passive spectators, was also

debated. The professionals of these institutions realized that culture must be accessible to everyone.

"I believe that now all (artistic) institutions are very close to the educational world, from a broad concept of inclusion, where culture is a right for everyone and not a prized possession of a few members of the elite I see it as a civic stance, of collaboration, to shape us all as a social group". (I4C-artistic staff)

2. One key aspect of their professional development is **implementing inclusive methodologies through artistic education**. Professionals recognize the potential of art education for implementing diversified methodologies, considering detailed planning essential. However, this planning must be flexible to accommodate new ideas and needs arising during implementation.

"The whole project can fit on one sheet of paper, but it must be open to what inspires us, what we feel like, and what we could teach based on how it's going." (IC9-teacher)

Using inclusive methodologies focuses on the learning process rather than outcomes. Instead of focusing on a specific result with rigid process management, there should be room for flexibility, allowing the learning process to evolve naturally during the project's design and development, creating a kind, dynamic, and adaptive educational environment.

"During the break in the activity, some professionals expressed that transition times between one activity and another should not be considered as rest time. Students need to rest, not everyone moves at the same pace or has the same needs, so it is necessary to modify the schedule and adapt the next activity." (FN6B)

Professionals believe that using inclusive methodologies enhances all students' learning, starting with forming heterogeneous student teams.

"Students with and without disabilities are mixed. Small groups (3-5 students) are formed to carry out the activity based on their interests and needs, considering the activity objectives. Students work cooperatively: they explain the actions to be taken, resolve doubts among themselves, share materials, and help each other in performing the activity." (FN10A)

Professionals note that inclusive methodologies ensure all students can participate. They attribute to artistic education the opportunity to use different languages, materials, and forms of expression, facilitating students' knowledge construction.

"The different languages we use through the arts facilitate accessibility for all students...we have adapted human resources, materials, and specialized educators to meet the needs of any student." (IC3-artistic staff)

3. Professionals also consider that they have gradually managed to **collaborate and communicate in a richer way**. Flexibility in design and implementation allows for continuous adjustments and improvements, giving voice to various professional profiles that complement the proposals, making them richer and more complete.

"In a team, yes; alone, no, because I think many joint perspectives are needed to build a whole. The different professional profiles are complementary, and the proposal is much richer and deeper." (I8C-teacher)

In this sense, professionals consider that working together in designing an inclusive artistic project is fundamental to understanding the interests and needs of professionals

and their students, improving the activities' adaptation in artistic institutions, their relevance, and impact.

"It has been very helpful to have a prior conversation with the teacher, to know what they are working on in class, what they are exploring, and to be able to tailor the museum visit to their interests. It is crucial to understand the students' needs." (I5A-artistic staff)

However, the professionals perceived that the institutions must conceive of collaboration as a fundamental fact for the success of the proposals. A lack of sensitivity towards professional collaboration, as well as a lack of time and planning for creating collaborative spaces, are barriers hindering collaborative processes.

"It is very important for as many people as possible in the institution to be aware and sensitive: from management to service and technical staff. We lacked time to reflect more together... and if the schedule doesn't change, we won't make much progress." (I9B-artistic staff)

4. Another key element that emerged in several phases of the project is **learning to do critical self-reflection on their professional development**. Professionals believe it is important to be aware of their capabilities, knowledge, and the need for support to promote inclusion processes and their professional learning in an inclusive environment.

"You need to know where your own competencies end and where you need someone with competencies you lack. We have a good heterogeneous team with a specialized vision, from both pedagogical and artistic perspectives." (I10C-teacher)

Professionals discover and overcome their prejudices towards people with disabilities when given the opportunity to work closely with them and in collaboration with expert

professionals. A lack of knowledge and experience regarding disability can be a barrier they need to overcome.

"I have had the opportunity to break down barriers and realized I had prejudices towards people with disabilities. Of course, a lack of knowledge and experience can be a restriction for me." (I12B-artistic staff)

Professionals also express the need for greater competencies in using assistive technology and teaching tools to facilitate an inclusive learning environment.

"Many professionals are simply afraid of doing something wrong and therefore do not dare to participate. If you have a person in a wheelchair in front of you, you think something could happen if you touch them the wrong way. I would need some help to know how to do it." (I7B-artistic staff)

During the project's implementation, professionals express that, at times, they felt limited in certain disciplines due to a lack of training or experience. However, this limitation is overcome through the collaboration process, sharing knowledge and experiences with other more specialized professionals.

"For example, being from the musical area, I feel very comfortable with it. However, creating crafts is more challenging for me. This year I am learning a lot. I mean, you explain it to me, and eventually, I get it, but it requires more effort." (I6A-teacher)

5. Finally, **professionals have realized** that, in inclusive art projects, **their role is to guide, support and accompany students** in the learning process. They have expanded their competences to be able to do so.

"Sometimes, when you present the activity, the students themselves start telling you what to do. It's about letting out what the students have inside. It can be difficult, but then they start getting motivated. You propose, and gradually they join this collective activity. In the end, they start proposing, and you guide and support them." (I11-teacher)

During the execution of the projects, the professionals change from a direct instructive role (or often passive role) to one of guidance and support that is integrated into the development of the activity. They need to be active participants in the creative process, collaborating with all participants—students and other professionals—and experiencing the artistic creation spaces freely and communally.

"After the activity, museum educators meet with teachers to assess how they (the teachers) participated in the activities and were not just observers of what their students were doing in the museum." (FN14C)

Four Learning Opportunities for Students in an Inclusive Artistic Space

1. Students reported that, in all phases of the project, the activities and actions undertaken provided **learning opportunities to improve competences in social relationships**, as they interacted with students with and without disabilities, professionals from artistic institutions, and teachers from other schools—people they had never met before —enhancing their interpersonal skills.

"I was worried because I didn't know how to do it; I didn't know if you (referring to the professionals) would understand me. I liked doing the project, and I see that you understand and pay attention to me." (I2B-disabled student)

The activities undoubtedly posed a challenge for students in establishing social relationships with other students with disabilities, reflecting on their capacities and limitations in relating to them and using special education professionals as learning models.

"When I saw them (students with disabilities) come in, I was scared and wondered how I would relate to them. I'm happy because I did it." (I7C-non-disabled student)

Teamwork during activities allowed them to strengthen social bonds, accepting suggestions and guidance from their peers regarding materials, planning, or activity execution.

"In a group of 5 students... they kindly share materials and teach each other how they would do it... they positively welcome suggestions for improvement made among themselves." (FN6A)

2. A significant aspect of students' learning process is acquiring **knowledge related to artistic skills**. Particularly notable are skills related to:

Expression of ideas and emotions (*"Well, to me, 'The Consolation' - a sculpture by Josep Llimona - produces sadness and it's like it's crying because someone didn't arrive." - I12C-disabled student*).

Critical interpretation of artworks (*"Those lines are like they're being sucked to the centre" - Agustí Puig's work 'Hombre Aspirado' - I6B-non-disabled student*).

Experimentation with different materials (*"I had never sewn with a sewing machine and this type of fabric following a pattern." - I9A-non-disabled student*).

Perception of details and nuances (*"Well, I do see the hands and the hair."* - Sculpture 'Home Cactus' by Julio González - I14C-disabled student).

Artistic creation skills (*"I learned to move my arms like this, and my legs."* - I8C-disabled student).

3. Inclusive artistic projects develop individual **decision-making** and problem-solving, enhancing personal **self-determination competencies**. Moreover, students' participation in the artistic creation process is noteworthy as they perceived themselves as creators and protagonists of the artistic activity, not mere passive spectators.

"A group of 7 students represent 'The Consolation' (sculpture by Josep Llimona) in clay, helping each other and sharing materials. Others are painting it." (FN7C)

In this sense, students' participation generates significant learning due to their engagement in the activity's development and the personal significance they attach to their artistic creation, improving their attention span and persistence in facing challenges.

"I'm very happy with the dress we made. Do you see how I sewed these buttons? I'm excited about the fashion show we're going to do." (I9A-disabled student).

Furthermore, this participatory process through artistic activities helps students regulate their behavior, avoiding disruptions in the activity.

"A student and a teacher swing a student with autism while performing a dance activity. The teacher comments that this student had never allowed herself to be touched and would run away or start hitting when touched." (FN11C)

4. Students have learned **to value diversity as a positive fact**. They consider that accepting diversity involves recognizing everyone's unique qualities and understanding that everyone can positively contribute to their personal and group growth.

"With this project, I saw that there are very diverse people, with disabilities, and they must be accepted because everyone is who they are, and I can work with anyone because I see they contribute to me." (I16B-non-disabled student)

Moreover, students believe that respecting people with disabilities, avoiding pitying attitudes, and treating them with dignity contribute to a healthier and more respectful social environment.

"I'm with a group of people who don't feel pity for me. And I feel very comfortable." (I10A-disabled student)

This positive attitude towards diversity translates into an understanding that barriers to inclusion stem more from the context than individual characteristics of students with disabilities.

"We should make more inclusive clothing. We need to use other materials, not just buttons and zippers, because some people can't use them." (I13A-non-disabled student).

DISCUSSION

The results of this research show that participation in an Inclusive Artistic Space (IAS) facilitates collaborative knowledge building for both professionals and students. We have identified several learning opportunities for students and avenues for professional development within IAS, thereby addressing our research questions.

In these spaces, collaboration between professionals from different fields and institutions, along with students of different abilities, is fundamental. These interactions enable participants to learn new ways of relating to each other, valuing and celebrating diversity, and developing a common language regarding what educational and social inclusion means (Ainscow, 2020).

An IAS ensures the presence, participation, and learning of all participants -professionals and students- meeting the basic conditions for ensuring access to education for all by engaging all relevant stakeholders (OECD, 2023). Relationships and networks inside and outside schools allow participants to learn collectively in authentic situations, which reinforces the integration of applicable knowledge and skills. Thus, situated learning is expanded to include the social and transformative impact of such learning in context (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). The structure of inclusive art projects promotes deep learning as it places students at the center of their creation, collaborating with their peers and facing challenges with a positive attitude. Participants take control of their own process and develop a strong personal identity, changing from the teacher's transmitting role to that of guide and support (Duran et al., 2019).

This approach makes it possible to understand education not as a simple process of knowledge transmission, but as interconnected practices that include the agency of teachers, students and other actors within a material and social context (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Learning is most effective when it occurs in communities of practice because they promote mutual support, innovation, and the creation of shared meanings (Kisiel, 2014).

This also leads to professional development in all dimensions of instructional support and learning domains. This change in educational interaction, which involves the emotional aspects of students, appears to increase their self-efficacy, motivating them to continue working, collaborate with others, and achieve academic results (Robinson, 2017).

Networking and collaboration are crucial at all levels (Miquel & Duran, 2017) but are especially vital for vulnerable or at-risk populations and the institutions that serve them. Social relationships and structures influence the types of resources people know about or have access to (Hands, 2023b). In the context of disability and special schools, existing social capital has immense potential. However, this potential can remain hidden if these individuals do not participate in community life (Robledo, 2018). Environments like IAS help highlight the richness of diversity and foster relationships among all participants.

According to Fallik et al. (2013), it is necessary to bridge the gap between formal and informal contexts to help students maximize the opportunities their community offers. In an educational system where children and young people go to school for many years, the role of the school is key in building these bridges. Professionals within IAS promote these bridges as they build relationships with the community, participate with their students in activities, plan these activities together and ensure that these activities are accessible to all participants (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2022b; Imms et al., 2011).

This aligns with the idea of a "village mentality" as proposed by Subban et al. (2024), where different stakeholders are prepared to analyze their contexts, identify barriers and facilitators, and plan effective strategies to monitor inclusion in education and culture.

CONCLUSIONS

Professional development is a key mechanism through which professional capital is built, sustained, and enhanced. Specifically, professional development directly contributes to increasing human capital by providing educators with opportunities to acquire new skills, deepen their subject knowledge by making connections with other disciplines, and helping them refine their practice to become more effective with students. In addition, collaborative learning experiences enhance social capital by building strong interprofessional networks and fostering a culture of collaboration and mutual support. Finally, decision capital also improves (Osmond-Johnson & Fuhrmann, 2022). Therefore, we affirm that IAS significantly impact the development of professional capital through the implementation of inclusive artistic projects.

Professionals from artistic institutions, schools, and students have realized that inclusive artistic projects bring art and culture closer to everyone. They have developed essential personal, social, and artistic skills for life.

These projects must be carried out by interdisciplinary teams, with professionals from different fields collaborating to exchange experiences and knowledge, creating a collaborative agency (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). The result has been collaborative artistic creations, where all individuals contributed their ideas and creative practices, which have been shared with people outside the project, continuing to bring art and culture to the whole community.

However, during the implementation of the projects there have been several challenges that have had to be overcome, many of them related to the educational and artistic institutions. Their organizational structure does not facilitate a flexible planning, the

generation of collaborative spaces or a comprehensive time planning with the needs of all actors. In addition, mobilizing all the agents involved, students and professionals, has been a very complex task since the project was developed in both educational and artistic places. These barriers must be considered if we want these experiences to be sustainable in the future.

Ultimately, we aim to create an ecology of equity, as stated by Ainscow et al. (2012), while being aware of the complexity of interactions between the various elements of this ecology and their implications for achieving more equitable social systems. But it is our duty towards future generations to provide inclusive experiences that build local communities fostering well-being.

Funding and Declaration of Interest Statement

This article is part of the Erasmus+ INARTdis Project “Fostering social inclusion for all through artistic education: developing support for students with disabilities” 621441-EPP-1-2020-1-ES-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN, funded by the EACEA.

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE THREE PROJECTS

IMAGE 1. Project A: We (re)invent ourselves through fashion. Design Museum.

IMAGE 2. Project B: The emotions. How we express them and how we hide them. Casal de la Font d’En Fargues, Theater.

IMAGE 3. Project C: Get excited by sharing. Mercat de les Flors, the House of Dance.

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