

Artefiletics as a pro-inclusive strategy supporting common education in formal space

(overview essay)

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Abstract: *The paper presents artefiletics as one of the pro-inclusive strategies through which it is possible to support inclusive education in primary school. By using the techniques of artefiletics, which are based mainly on expressive artistic expression and reflective dialogue, it is possible, from the point of view of all present, to know the pupil's personality within the team, and so forth. Thanks to the integration of artefiletics as a pro-inclusive strategy, all participants can reflect on each other's experience in the group from the perspective of the participant, supervisor, or educator. This paper also describes a specific artefiletic model that was part of the survey findings. The implementation took place at the first stage of primary school, where we created two groups – control and experimental. The characteristics of the artefiletic module (created from 4 groups of activities) provide opportunities to develop inclusion in education process. At the same time, the paper is supplemented by specific examples of the pupils' works coworking in a heterogeneous class.*

Keywords: *Inclusive education, Class, Artefiletics, Approach*

1 Introduction to the issues of artefiletics

In Slovakia, the term artefiletics has been used since the 1990s. Artefiletics offers the possibility of implementing specific elements connected to inclusion in the school environment. Through artistic expression, artefiletics reveals, recognizes, and implements human behavior's unconscious and subconscious motives into the conscious dimension. This analytical work of self-knowledge teaches pupils self-reflection. The artefiletic intervention is mediated by a reflective dialogue between the teacher and the pupil. According to Homzová (2015), artefiletics is considered a modern screening, preventive and interventional approach used in various school environments,

especially abroad. Regardless of its differences, moving in artefiletics allows pupils to develop emotional, social, and creative aspects. At the same time, it is possible to observe changes in self-reflection, classroom acceptance, development of communication skills, graphomotor skills, and progress in other areas of school education. Šobánková (2020) claims that art education is primarily about practical, creative activities of an expressive and receptive nature. The author perceives the pupil's otherness in the given context (2020, p. 42) as a source of inspiration (similarly, it is so in art, at the latest from the modern period), not as a problem. Art tasks are designed not only based on expression, practical tasks but also on the base of cognitive challenges. Also, in artefiletics, thanks to a pupil's artistic expression and subsequent reflection, a teacher can capture the pupil's specific problems within his or her expression and reflection to an artistic activity. According to Slavík (1997), an authentic art becomes a means of transformation, discovering the inner-fictional world.

Benefits of the artefiletic module in support of building an inclusive environment

We consider inclusion a phenomenon since it is much discussed but not implemented. Therefore, we can speak of inclusion as **a trend that brings innovation**, which we rarely observe; hence it is still an extraordinary process in education. At the same time, inclusion can be considered a particular innovation to increase the quality of the educational process in school (Lechta, 2018, Šuhajdová, 2020). Implementing inclusive education is not an easy or short-term task for the school and its participants. There is a clear need for an in-depth focus on inclusive education solutions for the benefit of all participants. It is related to the setting and direction of acceptance of heterogeneity on the part of the school and its culture in the given country, region, and so forth. An elaborated theoretical basis of inclusive education and its broader transdisciplinary connection and an entire legally fulfilled framework with the praxeological anchoring in the school or classroom are needed. Based on this and practical experience, it is possible through a pro-inclusive approach to artefiletic activities, reflective dialogue in an inclusive classroom that we know that artefiletics helps us:

1. *Build social cooperation in the class/group.* Discover and deepen pupils' potential in the classroom, understand the processes in the classroom, group, or school club of children.
2. *Develop the individual's emotional stability in the class/group.* Emotionally knowing how to express oneself in an art form and thus release tension that could otherwise be a manifestation in the form of negative behavior. It teaches the participants to work with relationships through experiential work with the class/group. Improves pupils' self-reflection. It supports the building of a positive perception of pupils, empathy for others, and the related acceptance and acceptance of the diversity of pupils and pupil groups.

3. *Know the individuality of the pupil in the class/group.* To develop the pupil's personality within the team, and so forth. It supports creativity, trust, initiative, mutual communication. It breaks the aversion or disadvantage of the teaching processes and allows the pupil to experience appreciation and success, despite his disability and otherness.
4. *Educate the arts* in connection with the possibilities of experiential knowledge of various situations.
5. *To build visual literacy* in the context of mutual interaction between word and image critical concepts and vice versa.
6. *Accept and be interested* in pupils in the class/group. It creates opportunities to improve pupil achievement or appreciation in the class/group.
7. *Increasing the professional competencies of teachers.* Competence enhancement primarily affects reflective dialogue, and it is this method, path, the approach that can help build a better functioning inclusive education and pupils' acceptance of each other.
8. *Increasing pupils' competencies.* The critical competencies in the field of methods in this type of teaching will develop pupils' professional knowledge, offer divergent solutions, find connections with real current life, critical thinking, and evaluation. The educator develops his/her critical competencies related to the learning process and the learning outcomes by creating the school curriculum and competencies for teamwork.

2 Survey preview

We implemented the integration of artefiletics as a pro-inclusive strategy in an experiment. According to Gavora (2010), when implementing the experiment itself as a quantitative method, it is possible to prove the causal consequences of pedagogical action, i.e., one educational phenomenon affects another. The characteristics of individual groups are presented in tabular processing (Table 1).

Table 1

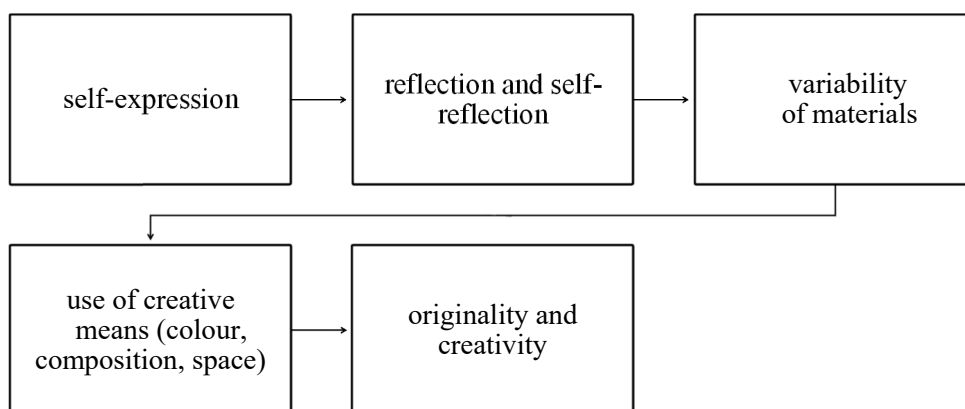
Group	Count	Group characteristics
control	8	A contrasting group that worked differently than the experimental one (without the principles of the artefietic approach). The group worked with the same material, same time, and same conditions.
experimental	8	We carried out the activities with an experimental group of pupils at the primary level of the school system. The experimental group consisted of pupils with specific disabilities: Below, we offer you an overview of selected activities, which we applied to a sample of 8 pupils in the primary school. It was a range from 1st to 4th year. There were three boys in the group (1st boy: dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dysorthography; 2nd boy: dyslexia, dysgraphia, dysorthography; third boy: dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dysorthography) and one girl with a disability. This research sample was compiled randomly. Regarding the family history concerning the complete or incomplete family, there was a girl in the alternating care of the parents, who took care of herself, resp. she demanded more attention and went to see the teacher all the time. If we were to provide a more detailed view of the family environment of other pupils, perhaps not suitable conditions for the necessary preparation for school, learning, providing the necessary teaching aids, and so forth., we could still identify two pupils.

At the beginning of the experiment, we tried to identify subjects according to different vital competencies and characteristics to ensure an equal selection of respondents for the experimental and control groups (cf. Gavora, 2010). An input measurement is required to determine how similar the experimental and control groups are. In the experiment, such an input measurement is called a pretest. Due to this, we performed a pretest of both groups and observations to compare individual pupils and their selection for the experimental and control groups. According to Gavora (2010), it does not always have to be a test. This can be any measurement you check to see how similar the two groups are in the essential characteristics. We entered the test simultaneously and under the same conditions for both groups and compared the results. The pupil's task was to draw pictures into geometric shapes on A4 sheet of paper or create connections between them. They should have approached them within the imagination, gained previous visual experience, and so forth. Moreover, we tried to fill as many geometric shapes as possible, connect them, and transform them. We did not find a significant difference between the two groups, and the pupils showed relatively similar observations. There was someone who did not fill in the whole paper, drew the whole paper, needed to make sure with the question, and so on. Since we worked in the school environment (hobby education), where there are no fixed groups of pupils, it was possible in terms of research to ensure the selection of subjects according to the conditions that characterize Gavora (2010) in the implementation of pedagogical research.

3 The experiment in the form of group artefiletics

In connection with artefiletics as a pro-inclusive strategy, we created a model that focused on discovering and deepening pupils' potential in the school environment. The mentioned model aimed to acquire practical skills, looking for new possibilities, creative solutions, which are inevitably brought by group-implemented artefiletics with an emphasis on optimizing inclusive education in the school environment. When working with the group, we focused the mentioned approach on group dynamics and relations between individual group members (which was also a condition for education in various subjects). The chance of the artefiletic approach is that the group's members are developing in the area of sociability, i.e., positive relationships, cooperation, mutual communication, support, and mutual interactions are supported, which is also the fundamental essence of inclusive education. The experimental artefiletic model aimed to meet three goals, namely cognitive, affective, and, of course, psychomotor concerning manipulation, which we can again connect with inclusive education, which seeks to address these aspects. The application of artefiletics offers the identification of a research sample of pupils and points out a possible proposal for solving current problems of inclusive education through an artefiletic approach. *Artefiletics inspire the use of this method in our conditions in the pedagogical activity of a teacher of art subjects.* The author of this project is Jana Homzová, and the pilot project was implemented in Dubová Elementary School, Bratislava, under the supervision of Zuzana Krnáčová, lecturer of the ongoing accredited course *Artefiletics and Inclusive Class in the process of creation, reflection, and acceptance* (2021). The artefiletic products of the experiment participants were assessed based on specific factors, which we processed into the attached scheme as a flexible process (Scheme 1).

Scheme 1



The scheme describes the individual sequential steps of the ongoing experiment. The individual steps are incorporated within a vertical and horizontal space.

4 Presentation of an artefiletic model in the form of an experiment

The individual activities within the artefiletic module were divided into four groups (Scheme 2). Individual activities within the artefiletic module were adapted for primary school pupils. Changes were made, and the researcher realized new possibilities for how to fulfil the possibility of an inclusive path realized through artefiletics towards positive changes concerning the acceptance of the pupils' personality in the experimental group and the participants to each other.

Scheme 2: *Content of the artefiletic model*



5 Activities aimed at relaxation and release of tension

Activities aimed at relaxation and release of tension focus on comparing one's own opinions with classmates' opinions on creation. Also, to get to know your hobbies and character traits and, of course, to get to know the hobbies of your classmates. The given aspects are on the cognitive level.

On the affective side, it is perhaps a more complicated grasp than, for example, realizing that just like everyone else is unrepeatable, it is necessary to respect the differences in the characteristics of your classmates. To adapt to the class, to accept the opinion of another classmate, even if it does not have to be only positive, and, of course, to learn to be empathetic. The activities we have applied in this spirit are *group painting, playing with sand and chalk, prints*. Demonstrations of pupils' work (8, 9 years old) focused on relaxation and release of tension. The works are composed of textiles or clothing. A bee is depicted. The second image shows a teddy bear with a mobile phone.



Figure 1: A bee



Figure 2: A bear with a mobile phone

Activities aimed at developing social relationships in the classroom

These activities teach pupils to get to know themselves and the degree of belonging. Also, present your opinion, know your class, name your inner voice, or communicate or cooperate in activities. These were activities that focused on developing and functioning social relations in the group. We took advantage of activities under these names, *namely the stone symbol of the group, our class, school photo album, communication drawing, color meeting*. Demonstrations of pupils' work (10 years) focused

on developing social relationships in the classroom. The work is drawn with drawing art material of a broader range. It is a communicative picture with the story.



Figure 3: *The story of a kitten*

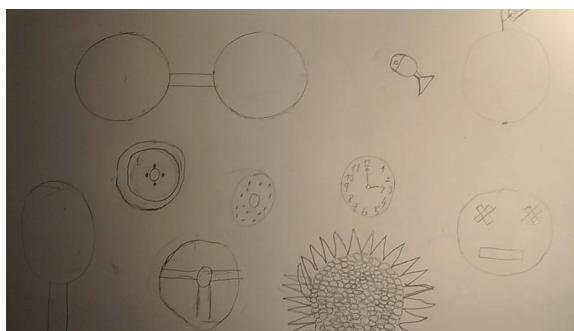


Figure 4: *My day*

Conflict resolution activities

When conducting activities such as *classroom problems*, *problem-solving visualization*, or *a suitcase*, we came across interesting and creative solutions to problems, either within the framework of artistic expression or the interview with the pupils themselves. These tasks place the pupil in the position of a solver of problems, their creative solution, and their survival, where a more significant and especially adequate degree of effectiveness of the teacher as an artifact's moderator, resp—reflective conversation. Demonstration of pupils' work (10 years old) focused on conflict resolution. The work is drawn with the use of drawing art material in pencil. It is a technique of “frottage” and capturing various structures around us in the metaphor of application to the school group of pupils

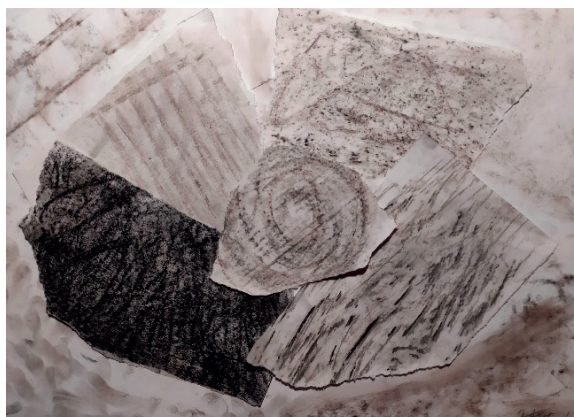


Figure 5: *My mood*

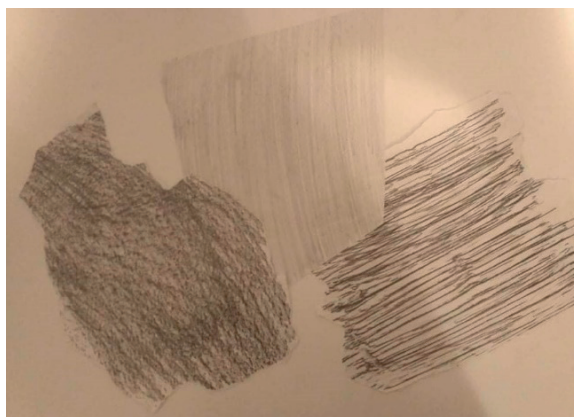


Figure 6: *My day*

Activities aimed at expressing opinions, attitudes, and emotions

In such activities, demands are placed on expressing one's emotions, feelings, whether to discuss a current topic or verbalizing one's opinion on colour, expressing one's emotions through colour. To be able to accept oneself and one's classmates, to empathize empathetically with one's classmate's experience. Search in the abstract and non-figurative works of the association. Activities with names like *a mask*, *modeled mood*, *collage of opinions*, *color*, *collage of myself*, *tree of life*, *action watercolor*, *mandala*, *what I am*, *what I should be*, *what I want to be* are focused on perhaps the most sensitive issues, namely building opinions, attitudes and emotions. Teachers are well aware that the emotional setting of pupils in a group is an essential factor that can affect the course of education itself, both positively and negatively (Homzová, 2015, pp. 31–44).



Figure 7: *My self*

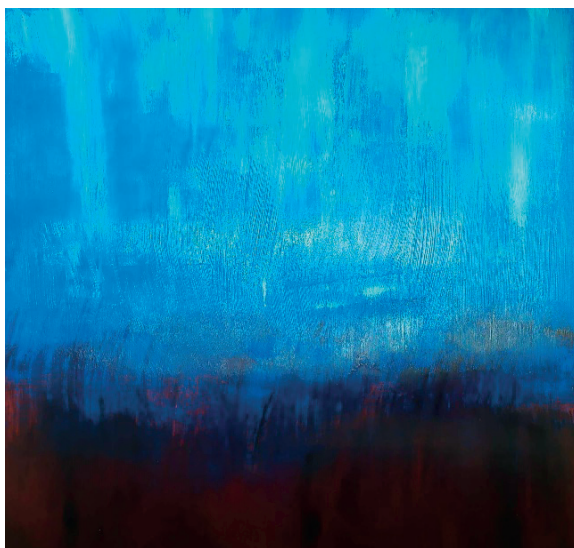


Figure 8: *This is me*

Demonstrations of pupils' work (10 years old) focused on conflict resolution. The works are painted with the use of tempera painting art material. It is a colour expression of character, personality, qualities, emotions of each pupil, through the means of expression of colour.

Continuous evaluation of the artefiletic model in the form of an experiment

The combination of both inclusive approach and artefiletics can fulfil individual tasks, which we consider beneficial for each participant in the school environment:

- To develop, deepen, improve and innovate the professional competencies of pedagogical and professional staff for the facilitation and reflection of group class dynamics on the way to inclusion.
- To expand and innovate expertise on inclusive education, group processes, and the identification of pupils' individual needs.
- Apply the latest knowledge on inclusive education to work with group class dynamics.
- Apply innovative approaches based on the principles of artefiletics and develop professional competencies (self) reflection and facilitation in the lesson or the program.
- Deepen competencies related to the peculiarities, specifics, and principles of working with pupils with special needs.
- When working with the class, expand preventive and interventional competencies in artefiletic techniques, methodology, and reflective dialogue.
- Provide new starting points for working with other professionals for pupils at risk.

6 Final evaluation

The artefiletic method enhances pupils' critical social competencies through the support of teamwork, mutual communication, and crucial competencies concerning their person through self-reflection, awareness, assessment, and development of themselves and their values. This form of action on pupils will thus gain interdisciplinary connections with other areas of school education. With this inclusive approach, we can direct the current problems of inclusive education at the primary level of the school system to positive changes and the gradual removal of barriers to inclusion.

Artefiletics is a path that we can incorporate into primary education as part of individual lessons that appeal to reflection and acceptance. In a more trivial sense, this would emphasize the principle of feedback, where the teacher is the moderator of the conversation between the pupil and him or her, respectively. Not to miss the stage in education where mutual communication between pupil is needed. Another possibility is to set aside artefiletics as a separate subject, which with all the mentioned elements teaches pupils to grow and develop emotionally and socially with an individual curriculum tailored to the given group of pupils. Furthermore, the last option would be to set up early communities with artefiletic activities, where pupils talk about what they experience, how they feel, how they deal with critical classroom situations, communicate without pointing, listen, and respect each other. Artefiletics is a possible way of fulfilling inclusion conditions in terms of getting to know each

other, acceptance, coexistence or creating a pleasant climate, motivation to learn or achieve better school results, and so forth.

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