The Arts and SEN Learners: Impact and Implementation

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This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of candidature for the degree of M.A. Education.

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**Declaration and statements**

**DECLARATION**
This work is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the M.A. Education and has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed ........................................... (candidate)

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Abstract

This small-scale study focused on the impact of the arts on the social, communication and creative skills development and arts proficiency of learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in 6 schools in the south Wales area. It also examined the role of the teacher/facilitator when using the arts with SEN learners.

A multiple-case study methodology was applied to facilitate broad research and comparisons across different contexts. The methods for data collection included questionnaires, non-participant focused observations and semi-structured interviews. Questionnaires were used to elicit adult participants’ perspectives on the developmental impact of the arts with SEN learners and the role of the teacher/facilitator in this process, whilst observations were carried out to obtain qualitative data evidencing pedagogical practice. Finally, individual semi-structured interviews were used to validate and enable deeper analysis of the practical observations made.

The research concluded that the arts do have an impact on the development of SEN learners’ social, communication and creative skills, as well as their proficiency in the arts. Findings suggested that the role of the teacher/facilitator is very significant to this process in tailoring arts pedagogy to the individual needs of their SEN learners and, as such, aiding the impact on the aforementioned areas of development. Results implied the need for further research into the use of arts pedagogy with discrete SEN populations to ascertain the long-term retention and application of skills and arts proficiency developed.
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The Arts and SEN Learners: Impact and Implementation

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<td>Additional Learning Needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Arts Practitioner</td>
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<td>ASC</td>
<td>Autistic Spectrum Condition</td>
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<td>BERA</td>
<td>British Educational Research Association</td>
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<td>DfCMS</td>
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<td>NACCCE</td>
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<td>PMLD</td>
<td>Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties</td>
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1. Introduction

1.1 Research Statement

This research aimed to investigate the impact of the arts on the educational development of learners with SEN. It focused specifically on the development of learners’ communication and social skills, creativity and arts proficiency, and the role of the teacher/facilitator in implementing the associated pedagogy to aid progress in these areas. The research took place during the summer term of 2015, across 6 schools in the south Wales area. It focused on 54 SEN learners from Foundation Phase (FP) to Further Education (FE) contexts and also involved the participation of 6 teachers (T), 1 teaching assistant (TA) and 3 arts practitioners (APs) from both national and international locations.

‘The arts’ is a term that is often used to encompass combinations of subjects/disciplines, but for the purpose of this particular study, the arts refers to music, dance, visual arts and drama. Additionally, SEN is also known to differ in meaning and interpretation as a result of factors such as context, legislation and policy. As the context of this study was south Wales, the research adhered to the definition provided within section 312 of the Education Act 1996, on which the most current SEN Code of Practice for Wales (2004) is based.

The arts are known to operate within many paradigms of purpose in an educational context: for example, as discrete disciplines (e.g. drama, music) or as integrated practices (e.g. performing arts). This study examined integrated arts approaches where the aforementioned disciplines were combined within a lesson, used to support
curriculum delivery and potentially impact on SEN learners’ development. The aspects of educational development under investigation (examined in greater detail in Chapter 4) are reflective of drivers within national and international legislation/policy in relation to inclusive practice, equality and human rights, as well as ongoing research seeking to advocate the place of the arts in education:

If we look to measures of improved communication skills, socialisation, self-esteem, civic awareness, and aspiration – from the most challenged to the most talented – it is the arts which consistently enhance and improve learning outcomes (Smith, 2013, p.10).

In light of Smith’s point, a key focus for this particular research was the potential the arts have for ‘enhancing and improving learning outcomes’ in the areas of skills development and arts proficiency. It was important to witness this in practice across different contexts, as well as investigate the pedagogical theory underpinning its implementation.

The skills required for successful implementation of arts pedagogy are potentially demanding for teachers who may lack confidence or experience with either SEN learners and/or the arts. Additionally, the profile of arts in an educational context has repeatedly changed over the past century and into the 21st. This presents a further risk for teachers wishing to use arts methods with their SEN learners. As Deasy points out, ‘Innovative arts programs are sometimes thought to be at risk unless they demonstrate their value within the standards-and-accountability calculus’ (2002, p.110). A key aspect of the research therefore focused upon the role of the teacher/facilitator in implementing arts pedagogy successfully in order to ensure educational development.
Three research questions (RQs) were formulated in order to reflect the key areas of focus for the study: the impact of the arts (pedagogy and practice) on SEN learners’ development and the role of the teacher/facilitator in this process.

1.2 Research questions

1. To what extent do the arts promote the development of SEN learners’ communication and social skills?

2. To what extent do the arts promote the development of SEN learners’ creativity and arts proficiency?

3. What role does the teacher/facilitator play when using the arts with SEN learners?

A multiple-case study methodological design was applied during this study in order to facilitate examination of a range of SEN contexts, learners and teachers/facilitators. Appropriate research instruments were used to capture the relevant quantitative and qualitative data over the 6-week period. For RQs 1 to 3, non-participant focused observations were conducted in order to capture data related to pedagogy and practice. Furthermore, individual questionnaires and individual semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit adult participants’ personal views and opinions on key aspects of the study (again, for RQs 1-3).
1.3 Rationale

A case for the arts.

Staking a claim for the arts in education for all learners was of great importance in the educational climate in Wales at the time of this study, when we stood on the brink of a new National Curriculum, following the Donaldson review process, which included the independent report from Professor Dai Smith (2013). Smith’s report was one of many advocacy documents (such as, National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCE), 1999; Harland et al., 2000; and Deasy, 2002) representing a surge of research activity aimed at cultivating the portfolio of evidence demonstrative of the educational impact the arts can have. Anderson expresses the need for educational researchers to continue to contribute to the, ‘...growing body of evidence on the positive impact that exposure to the arts can have in the lives of young people’ (2012, p.133).

However, despite this academic rigour, there was still work to be done in converting words into action by way of policy, as Smith advocates: ‘What both partners – arts and education – need now is signal recognition, clear direction and, where required, the particular means to make a difference’ (2013, p.13). Therefore, an important aspect of the rationale for this study was its contribution to the body of evidence seeking to advocate the developmental potential of the arts in education.

A case for inclusive practice.

Again, this study took place when Wales stood on the cusp of change for SEN provision following a Welsh Government phase of consultation, culminating in a White Paper outlining proposals for the introduction of a new Additional Learning Needs (ALN) statutory Code of Practice (Wales, Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2014a, no page). Mirroring the reform programme, inherent within the Special educational
needs and disability (SEND) Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (England, Department for Education (DfE) & Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DfCMS), 2014), as well as key Acts of legislation (such as the Equality Act 2010), the Welsh Government had proposed changes that resonated and aligned with the research preoccupations of this study: ‘learners’ opinions should always be considered; ...all those involved in providing support to learners should work together to provide a seamless service’ (Wales, DfES, 2014b, pp.3-4). Whilst these points do not focus specifically on the developmental impact of the arts for SEN learners, they do echo the sentiments of this research, such as the importance of the learners’ opinions (dependent on communication skills) and the significance of adults involved in their educational provision.

The prospect of implementing arts pedagogy with SEN learners raised potential concerns regarding experience and training. In the proposed ALN Code of Practice, the Welsh Government stressed the importance of teachers/facilitators providing a seamless service for SEN learners, however as Jindal-Snape & Vettraino state:

> The amount of research that explores the use of drama as an educational tool with students who have special educational needs is limited, and this constitutes a further hindrance for teachers who wish to increase their competence in this area (2007, quoted in Kempe, 2013, p.164).

Although this refers specifically to one discrete arts discipline, Kempe, 1996 & 2013; Ockelford, Welch & Zimmerman, 2002; and Arts Council England, 2003, additionally stress the importance of training for teachers wishing to use arts approaches with SEN learners. Smith shares these concerns, reiterating, through his recommendations to the Welsh Government, the need to ensure training for teachers in arts provision as well as more consistent collaboration between arts organisations and educational
establishments (2013, p.39). Therefore an additional focus of the research was the nature of the role of teacher/facilitator in successfully implementing arts pedagogy with SEN learners.

**A case for the arts with SEN learners.**

Peter proposes that:

> At first sight, the notion of drama in relation to many children with severe and complex learning needs may seem inappropriate – beyond their representational capabilities and level of social understanding (2003, p.21).

Indeed, the abstract concept of aesthetic understanding, coupled with the inherently practical nature of drama and the arts in general may seem potentially inaccessible for some SEN learners. However, at odds with this notion is the aforementioned importance of inclusive practice and the pedagogical steps that should be taken to ensure that SEN learners can access all aspects of the curriculum. As Kempe argues, ‘Many commentators on teaching young people with learning difficulties would agree that the principles of good teaching are the same no matter what the make up of the class’ (1996, p.4). Therefore, it was important for this study to examine how arts pedagogy might be made accessible for SEN learners, and the impact it could have on their skills development in light of existing evidence and research.

In reference to skills development, Harland *et al.* listed seven outcomes discovered when using the arts in secondary school contexts, which included: ‘…(ii) arts knowledge and skills; …(iv) creativity…; (v) communication and expressive skills; (iv) personal and social development…’ (2000, pp.23-24). This was significant, as findings in a
mainstream educational context already appeared to be proving the impact of the arts on learners’ skills. In their study, Taggart, Whitby & Sharp presented findings that further advocated the developmental potential of the arts:

Almost all countries/states conceive of the arts as contributing to personal and social/cultural dimensions of pupils’ development, as well as purely artistic ones. However, there is currently little evidence of assessment in relation to pupils’ development in these dimensions as outcomes of the arts (2004, p.39, italics in original).

In light of this research, it was essential that this study endeavoured to help narrow the evidence gap in relation to ‘outcomes of the arts’ by way of reporting an analysis of SEN learners’ skills development through arts pedagogy.

1.4 Ethical considerations

Kempe argues that, ‘...disabled people are all too often made invisible by and to a society that considers itself “able” or “normal”’ (2013, p.1). Educational policy at the time of this study stressed the importance of SEN learners’ voices in the process of intervention and support, with a view to enable them ‘...to be included fully in their school communities and make a successful transition to adulthood’ (Wales, DfES, 2004, p.1). It was therefore important for this research to present data and findings ethically, free from bias or prejudice and with the SEN learner’s voice in mind. Although the SEN learners themselves were not interviewed directly during the data gathering process, they were observed and were therefore the subjects of the research. Stake identifies the potential ethical issues when utilizing a case study methodology, stating:

It is true that in case study we deal with many complex phenomena and issues for which no consensus can be found as to what really exists – yet we have

The British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines points concerning 'Vulnerable Young People' were therefore key for consultation during preparation for this study in order for steps to be taken to 'minimize misrepresentation' (2011, pp.6-7, points 16-20). The non-participant observations made of SEN learners by the researcher were anonymised, thus showing adherence to the BERA guidelines (points 25-28) as well as respect for the privacy of the adult participants within the sample (2011, pp.7-8). Triangulation of data was achieved through the use of additional research methods (questionnaires and individual semi-structured interviews) used to ensure engagement with multiple perspectives on the observed events.

Given the national and international context of the research it was also important to take heed of point 13 of the BERA guidelines (2011, pp.5-6). Appropriate consent was obtained from all participants (United Kingdom (UK) and United States (US) based) and the nature of the research was fully disclosed by letter, also outlining their right to withdraw at any time (BERA, 2011, p.6, points 15 & 15). It was also important, in light of validity and reliability, to allow all participants the opportunity to respond to the research, as Anderson states: ‘The credibility of the research lies in the authenticity and clarity of the research participants’ voices...‘ (2012, p.147). This ethical approach was therefore adopted to prevent a distorted depiction of SEN learners and to present valid and credible results, which Lewis & Norwich argue:

...is vital in a climate in which there is a tendency for special educational needs (SEN) to be marginalized, or subsumed, and to be the focus of apology rather than intellectual curiosity (2005, p.xiii).
Before an appropriate research design was selected, it was important to firstly engage with the body of literature and ascertain existing critical perspectives associated with this field. This was particularly useful in establishing a critical lens through which to view and analyse the research data.
2. Literature Review

Much literature has been published since the turn of the century which seeks to make a case for the arts in education. Seminal national and international reports (such as, Fiske, 1999; Deasy, 2002; Downing, Johnson & Kaur, 2003; Taggart, Whitby & Sharp, 2004; Newman et al., 2010; and the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH), 2011) provide strong evidence of the positive outcomes the arts can reap within educational contexts. For this study it was important to align this evidence with theories, presented in the literature, focused on SEN learning in general and associated pedagogies. Key writers in the field of discrete arts disciplines used with SEN learners, such as Peter (2003) and Kempe (2013) were useful for providing evidence of practice and theoretical perspectives, combined with the work of established arts therapists such as Crimmens (2006) and Carleton (2012). This review of literature therefore marked a starting point in the process of this study, providing corroboratory conclusions across the reports and academic literature concerning the educational benefit of the arts with SEN learners. Key areas of focus derived from the literature included: the arts and academic learning; the arts and skills development, and the arts and holistic development, which provided a critical lens through which to analyse and evaluate the results of the study as a whole.

The Arts and Academic Learning

Since the turn of the century, the place of the arts in the curriculum in the UK and beyond has been advocated and discouraged. Polarised opinion hinges on the academic profile of the arts, with seminal advocacy reports (such as Henley, 2012 and Smith, 2013 in the UK, and Deasy, 2002 and the PCAH, 2011 in the USA) presenting strong
arguments for the impact of the arts on skills development and learners’ holistic growth, but without sound and uncontestable evidence of the measurable impact on academic development. The unified message and (in some cases) recommendation of these reports is that all learners should study the arts as a core area of the curriculum. However, in spite of such strong advocacy, tensions endure regarding the complexity of arts subjects in relation to assessment and measurement of academic impact. Newman et al., report that the term ‘impact’ is difficult to measure: ‘...with many writers questioning the applicability and practicality of the experimental approach for dealing with the complexity of arts impact’ (2010, p.15). Deasy identifies the same concerns amongst educational researchers who feel that more needs to be done to uncover the specific aspects of arts pedagogy that create a positive and measurable impact on academic progress (2002, p.7). It could therefore be argued that there is still much work to be done in order to provide concrete evidence of the impact the arts can have on academic progress before unanimous acceptance and equal standing within the curriculum can be achieved. This literature was useful in providing an overview of the educational landscape of the arts in education and also shed light on the potential challenges that may be encountered when aiming to measure the impact of the arts on skills development and arts proficiency.

The literature concerning the arts and SEN learners’ academic progress provided some interesting perspectives concerning an integrated arts pedagogical approach and curriculum access. Practitioners and educational researchers argue that the arts provide multiple entry points for curriculum access for SEN learners. Carleton provides clear justification for this perspective, explaining that, due to the range and complexity
of needs a teacher might encounter when working with SEN learners, multiple entry points are necessary in providing opportunities for them to learn and access the curriculum in different ways (2012, p.18). Sellman echoes this perspective, maintaining that the arts provide creative approaches to the curriculum for teachers, which are essential to the process of planning for inclusive practice (2012, p.5). Fiske also provides a useful metaphor for this process:

...studies suggest a more dynamic, less either-or model for the arts and overall learning that has more of the appearance of a rotary with entrances and exits than of a linear one-way street (1999, p.11).

This linear approach to learning is viewed as counterproductive by some theorists due to the impact that associated extrinsic motivators (such as testing) can have on SEN learners’ confidence and self-esteem. Kempe warns that an outcomes-driven approach places the emphasis on what SEN learners are unable to achieve, whilst simultaneously reducing the time teachers are able to spend exploring alternative routes to success (2013, p.164). Integrated arts approaches provide opportunities for SEN learners to achieve success relative to their cognitive and physical abilities due to their capacity to promote individual expression. As Eisner explains: ‘In most of the arts we seek diversity of outcome. We are interested in the ways vision and meaning are personalized’ (2002, p.44). Therefore combined evidence from the literature would suggest that although academic outcomes are not always quantifiable, the arts provide SEN learners with multiple entry points to the curriculum and opportunities to achieve academic success relative to their individual abilities, placing the emphasis on what they can do rather than what then cannot. This proved useful in establishing a
framework for my research, especially during the formulation of my RQs, which were duly adjusted in light of these findings to focus on the impact on SEN learners’ skills development, as opposed to their academic learning.

The Arts and Skills Development

The development of skills through the arts is well documented in advocacy reports and wider academic literature. Within the context of SEN, skills development (communication in particular) is deemed crucial to the encouragement of learner voice and to the process of effective integration amongst peers. Both McCurrach & Darnley (1999) and Kempe (2013) discuss the controversial ethical issues surrounding the treatment of SEN learners in education who, historically, have suffered discrimination and have also been misrepresented within the realms of the arts and media. McCurrach & Darnley link this discrimination partly to the lack of opportunity and provision created to encourage the individual voices of learners with disabilities (1999, p.122), whilst Kempe looks to the misrepresentation of people with SEN in popular art forms as a contributory factor to the distortion of views (2013, p.10).

Research has also revealed evidence within recent educational policy in both England and Wales of a greater emphasis on inclusion of the SEN learner in the process of statutory provision, and the importance of their contribution to it (Wales, DfES, 2014b and England, DfCMS, 2014). Principles underpinning the Welsh Government’s proposals for reforming the current SEN Code of Practice (2004) link directly to student voice: ‘...the best interests of learners must be a primary consideration; learners’ opinions should always be considered...’ (Wales, DfES, 2014b, p.3). It could therefore be
suggested that in order for learners with SEN to express their individual opinions (thus become empowered to affect their educational provision), efforts to develop communication skills are crucial.

Several sources of literature present strong theoretical perspectives on the impact of both the integrated arts and discrete arts disciplines on the development of SEN learners' skills. Cattanach, 1996; McCaslin, 1999; Booker, 2011; and Kempe, 2013, advocate the use of Drama with SEN learners due to the opportunities inherent in the discipline for developing communication and creativity. Several of the aforementioned writers attribute this to Drama pedagogy, which encourages collaborative and creative social interaction, and also to the nature of the discipline, where communication can take many different forms. This is of particular importance within an SEN context as levels and forms of communication amongst the population are varied. Krakow & Kopp give this point further significance, explaining that the development of communication skills could help combat the challenges faced by learners with disabilities in participating within social situations and in recognising and responding to social cues (cited in Crimmens, 2006, p.12). Peter identifies the impact that Drama could have when working with learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), stating that:

They [PMLD learners] may improve their effectiveness in social interaction and learn how to relate to others with greater sensitivity; for example with improved conversational competence skills, such as turn-taking and appropriate eye contact (2003, p.24).
Peter’s example also alludes to the multiple entry points to learning the arts facilitate, mentioned earlier in this chapter. For some learners (particularly those with PMLD) communication can be limited to that of eye movement, however, when placed in the context of a collaborative drama activity, eye contact becomes extremely powerful and can demonstrate communicative skills as well as cognition. Kempe provides an important warning to teachers and support staff in relation to the process of facilitating this kind of social interaction. He explains that in order for learners to develop their communication skills, adults must avoid the temptation of speaking for them ‘...and thus deny them the right to take charge of their own words and actions’ (2005, pp.157-60, cited in Kempe, 2013, p.165). Thus both the positive endorsement of arts disciplines and important caveats imparted for successful implementation were useful in demonstrating the positive and negative aspects of practice that could be encountered in relation to the arts and skills development within this study. In light of these critical perspectives, the role of the teacher/facilitator became of particular significance in relation to this research and therefore become a key focus for the third RQ.

On the subject of creativity, the literature presents the notion of a delicate balancing act that the teacher and support staff must strike when using the arts with SEN learners. Sellman articulates these challenges, stating that:

Balancing creativity and the occasional need to modify existing structures whilst staying loyal to national educational priorities, especially in special needs contexts where these sometimes simply do not apply, remains a challenge for many (2012, p.6).
The balance must therefore be struck between freedom and structure; the learners’ freedom to express their individual creative voice within a structured activity that ensures safety, promotes well-being and instills the confidence SEN learners sometimes lack that can limit creativity. Peter (2003) and Carleton (2012) discuss the influential theories of Piaget and Vygotsky on the importance of structured play inherent in arts approaches, which can lead to the social development and creative expression of learners with SEN. As Vygotsky explains:

The extent to which adults mediate play opportunities through joint action in shared experiences will affect how all children subsequently learn about their environment and how to be part of a culture and take their place in society (1978, cited in Peter, 2003, p.21).

Peter goes on to explain that providing opportunities for collaborative creative play is even more crucial for SEN learners due to their dependence on others in facilitating shared experiences. Carleton adds to this by emphasising the importance of scaffolded creative learning opportunities, which involves learners being guided in their participation by creative peers (as opposed to teachers) in order to help develop their independent ability to conduct and understand concepts, with a greater impact on application (2012, p.16). This area of the research was useful in raising my awareness to the significance of the teacher’s role in successfully implementing arts approaches with SEN learners in order to facilitate skills development.

**The Arts and Holistic Development**

In the advocacy reports made to their respective Departments of Education both Henley (2012) and Smith (2013) raise parallel concerns about vulnerable and underserved
populations who do not have access to the arts. They also express concerns regarding the marginalizing impact this could have as a result of lessened opportunities to collaborate and socialise. They therefore identify the important role that the arts play in the holistic development of learners. The Arts Council England provides an illustrative example of the holistic developmental impact an integrated arts experience had on a group of Key Stage 4 learners with PMLD and autistic learners working with BA Performing Arts students: ‘They [the SEN learners] manipulated their environment with independence and enthusiasm. Their self-esteem grew with the important realisation of their increasing control and sense of performance’ (2003, p.27). This case study helps to exemplify the reciprocal social and holistic developmental impact that can be facilitated through integrated arts projects involving learners working side-by-side with a common creative goal. Sellman’s theories augment this perspective as she advocates the need for a shift in focus from product-driven approaches ‘...to more sustainable, holistic and partnership-based working practices focused on building inclusive communities, in which creativity plays a central role as catalyst for change’ (2012, p.11). The literature therefore provides the interesting perspective that the arts can be a vehicle for social change and for the empowerment of SEN learners. It is important to acknowledge the therapeutic impact that can be achieved by non-arts therapy specialists when applied with SEN learners. Kempe reiterates this message, stating:

Any reservation about the applicability of dramatherapy for children with special educational needs should not be confused with the belief that any well structured and carefully monitored work in the arts can be therapeutic by merit of the fact that it can give the individual a greater sense of competence and self-worth (1996, pp.10-11).
This theme was useful in raising my awareness to the often un-quantifiable and immeasurable outcomes that can potentially be achieved through the implementation of the arts with SEN learners and would therefore have a bearing on the quality of the observations made during the data gathering process.

The range of literature accessed provided evidence that the arts can have a profound impact on the learning and skills development of SEN learners. The arts are discussed as a conduit for accessing other areas of the curriculum but literature revealed a discrepancy in evidence needed to substantiate claims that the arts are academic. The development of skills via the arts is well documented; communication skills are of particular importance in the changing climate of UK SEN (and ALN) policy where greater emphasis is being placed on learner voice during the process of statutory inclusive practice. Finally, the literature shed light on the often immeasurable and invaluable impact that the arts can have on the holistic development of SEN learners. It could be argued that, although this is an area that is not easy to quantify, it takes precedence over academic progress as it ensures social well-being. As Fiske points out in relation to arts experiences: 'By engaging his or her whole person, the student feels invested in ways that are deeper than "knowing the answer"' (1999, p.12).

The literature provided an academic context and theoretical frame to support my own investigation and presented opportunities to test central debates. The research design that follows was therefore devised to facilitate this process.
3. Methodology

The research was designed to investigate the impact of the arts on the skills development of learners with a range of SEN. A multiple-case study methodological design was used to examine 7 discrete cases. The research methods were selected to address the demands of the RQs and were thus used to gather the relevant data. Methods included: questionnaires, non-participant focused observations and individual semi-structured interviews.

The multiple-case sample comprised 54 learners (with a range of ages and SEN), 6 class teachers, 1 TA, and 3 APs. The data collection schedule took place over a period of 6 weeks and in all cases the sequence of data collection was the same. First, questionnaires were provided to all adult participants; second, non-participant focused observations were made of one lesson from cases 1-6; third and finally, individual semi-structured interviews with all adult participants took place. The rationale for these boundaries and schedule of events will be addressed later in this chapter.

3.1 Research methodology: Case study

It was important to select a paradigm that best suited both the subjects of the study (human participants) and the object of the study (the arts) (Thomas, 2011, p.23). The RQs reinforce the ‘human aspect’ at the heart of the study therefore indicating at an early stage that a non-positivist model of reality applied within a qualitative paradigm would be most appropriate (Silverman, 2013). Cohen, Manion & Morrison place this paradigm ‘...in direct contrast with its normative counterpart, [as it] is characterised by
a concern for the individual’ (2011, p.49). The concern for the individual was appropriate in the case of this study due to the focus on the developmental impact of the arts on SEN learners. Johnson & Christensen add weight to this justification, providing the metaphor of the wide- and deep-angle lens utilized in qualitative research to examine naturally occurring human nature in detail (2012, p.35).

The explanatory focus on the how in relation to social reality was a key concern of this research: how the integrated arts approaches impacted upon SEN learners’ skills development and how the teacher/facilitator features in this process. Yin relates this focus to the key concerns of a case study methodology, stating that this is a preferred approach, ‘...when (a) “how” or “why” questions are being posed...’ (2009, p.2). As an outsider looking in to each case during this study, I was in the position of minimal control over the events. With this in mind, it was clear that a ‘constructionist’ approach to the case study design was most appropriate as it allowed for a qualitative paradigm to be used, but at a more objective distance. Holstein & Gubrium support this approach, stating that:

Rather than trying to get inside the social reality [a naturalistic approach] the constructionist impulse is to step back from that reality and describe how it is socially brought into being (2008, quoted in Silverman, 2013, p.107, italics in original).

Through the process of identifying the position of the researcher in relation to the selected methodology, boundaries were defined (a technique encouraged by Stake, 1995; Cousin, 2009; and Lichtman, 2013). Lichtman explains that:
A case can be limited to a characteristic, trait, or behavior. You might study a child (or children) with a particular type of learning disability (characteristic). ...By extension, more than one case could be studied (2013, p.91).

Focusing on more than one case for this study was desirable due to the opportunity it provided for cross-case comparison. Due to the multifaceted nature and complexities associated with SEN and the different educational settings SEN learners can inhabit, it was considered an interesting prospect to examine this range. However, Arthur et al. raise concerns to be taken into consideration when implementing a multiple-case study design: the researcher should aim to achieve an in-depth understanding of each case whilst also maintaining a consistent and repeatable approach across them all for cross-case comparison to be valid (2012, p.103). Appendix 1 provides further details of the boundaries of each case.

3.2 Research methods

The following methods were used to address the established research questions:

- Questionnaires
- Non-participant focused observations
- Semi-structured individual interviews (3 of the 10 interviews were conducted online via Skype)

Please refer to Appendix 2 for a methods matrix.
3.2.1 Questionnaires

Arthur et al. suggest that the questionnaire can be a useful research instrument at the exploratory phase of a study as it can help define a problem, which can later be followed up with methods that penetrate a little deeper (2012, p.231). The questionnaire was therefore strategically provided at the start of the data-collection schedule to the adult participants within each case. It was useful to begin with this method as it helped establish a relationship with the participants by initiating a dialogue in relation to the RQs. The advantage was the opportunity to include a method that sought to elicit quantitative as well as qualitative data responses. Although quantitative methods are less commonly associated with qualitative paradigms, Silverman suggests that, ‘The fact that simple quantitative measures are a feature of some good qualitative research shows that the whole “qualitative/quantitative” dichotomy is open to question’ (2013, p.14). However, Burton & Bartlett do warn that in-depth, personal responses are difficult to elicit via questionnaire and that questions and answers often remain superficial (2009, p.75).

With Burton & Bartlett’s warning in mind it was important to carefully consider the construction of the questionnaire in order to address the RQs and to discourage surface responses. The RQs, as previously discussed, focus on the how and why of the phenomenon under investigation. This called for questionnaire construction that sought to elicit personal opinions. Johnson & Christensen propose the inclusion of a mixture of open- and closed-ended questions that seek to examine the exploratory and confirmatory aspects of the research (2012, p.169). Whilst Burton, Brundrett & Jones suggest the inclusion of rating scales when the researcher seeks to examine opinion:
'Generally ratings scales focus upon opinions and perceptions about issues rather than supplying factual information' (2008, p.91). The questionnaire (see Appendix 3) was therefore constructed to include a mixture of closed and open-ended elements through the combination of a Likert rating scale for gauging opinion, as well as a comments box where participants’ inner worlds could be explored, in their natural languages (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p.169).

3.2.2 Non-participant focused observations

Lankshear & Knobel explain that systematically recorded methods of observation are favoured by qualitative researchers due to their ability to help capture insights into social practices that are potentially deeper and richer in detail than those gathered during interviews (2004, p.219). The RQs called for this deep insight into the interactive nature of the arts as well as the collaborative nature of pedagogy.

Consideration of observations within this study was linked to concerns surrounding representation, validity and ethics. It was important to address the common paradox of observational practice within a classroom context, which is related to the emotional process of assessment and judgement. Wragg, although referring to judgmental observations, describes this paradox and the potential outcome if it is not addressed:

Skillfully handled, classroom observation can benefit both the observer and the person being observed, serving to inform and enhance the professional skills of both people. Badly handled, however, it becomes counter-productive, at its worst arousing hostility, resistance and suspicion (1999, p.3, quoted in O’Leary, 2014, p.30).
Silverman corroborates Wragg's views, highlighting that it is very easy for an observing researcher to appear judgmental and, as such, concerns must be alleviated as a pre-requisite to the observation (2013, p.217). It was therefore important that the adult participants in particular were conciliated through efforts to make transparent the nature and focus of the observations. Focused observations were selected and key aspects of the RQs formed the observational foci; these foci were disclosed to adult participants as a pre-requisite to the observations. As such, the observations involved a process Thomas explains as a systematic search for particular behaviour patterns (2011, p.165).

It was also important to decide the researcher's observational position during the data gathering process; observer as participant or non-participant required careful consideration. Ackroyd alludes to the ethical implications the different positions might have:

The external researcher tries to find truthful ways of looking through the window of rooms occupied by teachers and learners, the reflective practitioner looks instead for the most effective and ethical ways of living in the room with teachers and learners (2006, p.18).

As Ackroyd acknowledges, the ethics of examining the lived experiences of the observed needs to be considered and it was therefore thought most appropriate, given the nature and complexity of the observed learners’ needs, to observe from a non-participatory position.
3.2.3 Semi-structured individual interviews

Stake states that, 'Much of what we cannot observe for ourselves has been or is being observed by others' (1995, p.64). In light of this, the decision was taken to triangulate observations with individual semi-structured interviews. Conducting the interviews with adult participants directly after the observations acknowledged Stake's suggestion of the importance of gaining multiple perspectives during case study research. They were also used to encourage deeper responses from the adult participants than those provided in the questionnaires. Burton & Bartlett support this approach, stating that:

The advantage this has over straight questionnaires is that interviewers can clarify issues for respondents and they may also be able to encourage the respondent to expand upon certain answers if this is desirable (2009, p.85).

A semi-structured approach was used to maintain a sense of continuity across the cases through the use of common questions for all interviewees, which helped facilitate cross-case comparison.

Burton & Bartlett highlight the importance of the RQs when planning semi-structured interviews, thus during the piloting and planning phase of this study a series of questions were constructed which stemmed from the RQs (see Appendix 4) (2009, p.93). Many critics (Burton, Brundrett & Jones, 2008; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; and Yin, 2014) describe semi-structured interviews as taking place on a continuum from structured to un-structured due to the interactive nature of the method. This potentially helps maintain a balance between questions that satisfy the needs of the inquiry and those that help establish a rapport with the interviewee (Yin, 2009, pp.106-
Within this study, greater challenge was posed during three interviews that were carried out online. Salmons emphasises the complexity of online interviews, stating that they involve, ‘...personal, theoretical, and technical steps for the researcher and participant’ (2010, quoted in Lichtman, 2013, p.212). Online interviews were particularly useful as three of the adult participants were based further afield (England and the US). The technology was tested via a piloting process with all three of the interviewees concerned to ensure that the final interviews ran smoothly.

Yin talks of the potential impact of reflexivity in interviews where, ‘Your perspective unknowingly influences the interviewee’s responses, but those responses also unknowingly influence your line of inquiry’ (2014, p.112). He therefore warns that validity can be at stake when reflexive practice influences the perceptions of both the interviewer and the interviewee. For King & Horrocks, reflexivity is important as it emphasises the co-constructionist role of the researcher in accurately conveying the reality of the examined phenomenon (2010, cited in Lichtman, 2013, p.191). A method of mitigating the risk of reflexivity distorting the interview data used during this study was that of ‘member checking’, suggested by Stake who states that, ‘Although it is they [participants] who are studied, they regularly provide critical observations and interpretations... They also help triangulate the researcher’s observations and interpretations’ (1995, p.115). At the end of each interview, a summary of responses was provided, which allowed interviewees the opportunity to respond and either modify or confirm the researcher's inferences.
3.3 Validity, reliability and triangulation

Silverman states that, ‘Short of reliable methods and valid conclusions, research descends into a bedlam where the only battles that are won are by those who shout the loudest’ (2013, p.284). It was therefore important to take steps over the course of the study to minimize the production of unreliable and invalid data. Yin discusses the importance of consistency and accountability to enhance reliability during the different data handling phases of case study research (2009, p.45). He advocates an approach that involves clear documentation of events that could be repeated and potentially achieve similar results. Efforts were therefore made to ensure that each research method was planned, suitably piloted and conducted consistently across the cases.

Tensions surrounding the case study design linked to sampling and the researcher’s ability to generalize results to the wider population. Purposive sampling was used in this study as it is common in qualitative research where researchers ‘...seek out groups, settings and individuals where...the processes being studied are most likely to occur’ (Denzin & Lincoln, quoted in Silverman, 2013, p.148). This approach was necessary as the RQs were narrowly focused on specific pedagogical approaches used in conjunction with a relatively unique learner demographic. Kumar further advocates this approach stating that, ‘The primary consideration in purposive sampling is your judgment as to who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of your study’ (2011, p.207). However, Newby claims that uniqueness in case study research is unhelpful due to the researcher’s inability to transfer findings to other situations (2010, p.54). In response to this, many other critics raise suggestions for ways to mitigate the risk of findings that are unsuitable for generalization to wider populations.
Freebody explains that the study of multiple cases ‘...can add weight to the results by replicating the pattern-matching, thus increasing confidence in the robustness of the theory’ (2003, p.84). Therefore, the choice to adopt a multiple-case approach not only allowed for cross-case comparison, but also strengthened validity. Yin proposes the application of ‘analytical generalization’ in case studies, where the researcher strives to generalize their results to broader existing theory (2009, p.43). This was another approach applied to this study, facilitated by the pre-requisite of a literature review, which provided the analytical base on which to test and judge inferences made from the data.

Researcher bias poses an additional threat to validity in qualitative research. Johnson & Christensen propose that this:

...tends to result from selective observation and selective recording of information and also from allowing one’s personal views and perspectives to affect how data are interpreted and how the research is conducted (2012, pp.264-265).

The inclusion of a critical friend (a researcher and colleague within the field of education) during the data-gathering phase of this study helped prevent incidents of researcher bias. They were used specifically during the interpretation of interview data and during the analysis of questionnaire responses to help prevent distortion of results via biased analysis. This method of third-party data checking is advocated by Miles & Huberman who explain that it allows for verification of the analysis and conclusions drawn by the researcher (1994, cited in Burton & Barlett, 2009, p.25). Another method used to strengthen validity and prevent data distortion through researcher bias was
triangulation of research methods aimed at providing converging lines of inquiry that helped support confidence findings (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p.278).

3.4 Ethical considerations

At the heart of the BERA guidelines is the researcher’s responsibility to ensure an ethic of respect for all participants involved. Point 9 states that, ‘Individuals should be treated fairly, sensitively, with dignity, and within an ethic of respect and freedom from prejudice regardless of...disability...’ (BERA, 2011, p.5). It was therefore paramount that necessary measures be taken to ensure that all vulnerable adult and child participants were respected throughout. The delicate issues within this process surrounded the need to gain informed consent from all participants. Silverman explains that, ‘Issues of consent become even more complicated when you want to study vulnerable people such as children or adults with disabilities’ (2013, p.170). In light of this, and with close reference to points 16-21 of the BERA guidelines, approval of responsible adults was sought and consent was duly provided for all young people and adults observed during the study who were unable to provide it independently (2011, pp.6-7).

Further ethical issues relate to the representation of vulnerable groups by the researcher. This was particularly pertinent to this study due to the use of non-participant observations of said groups. It was therefore necessary to use aforementioned validation techniques, such as ‘member checking’, to ensure that vulnerable participants were fairly and ethically represented. It was also important, whilst conducting the observations, that the observed learners were not caused any
kind of distress by the researcher’s presence. Thus, great care was taken in confirming the details of the observations with the relevant staff prior to each visit, in following all instructions and adhering to school policy throughout. Munro et al. add weight to this issue, stating that:

In conducting research it is important not to add to the disempowerment of already disempowered groups, but it is also important actively to promote their empowerment or to leave them untouched and in the condition in which contact was first made (2004, p.299, cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p.248).

Having outlined the research methodology and methods for data collection, I will now go on to evaluate their effectiveness during the context of the study, paying close attention to the most significant results.
4. Results and Analysis

Having established current critical perspectives located within the literature and a methodological framework for the study, results will now be presented and examined in relation to each RQ.

4.1 RQ1: To what extent do the arts promote the development of SEN learners’ communication and social skills?

The quantitative data gathered from questionnaire responses revealed that 90% of participants strongly agreed with the notion that the arts promote the development of SEN learners’ communication skills, whilst 100% strongly agreed with that of their social development. When analysing the interview data, a process of ‘analytical coding’ was applied which involved ‘...creating categories [themes] that express new ideas about the data, coding to gather and reflect on all the data related to them’ (Richards, 2009, pp.102-103). Through this process five themes emerged in relation to RQ1 that will now be examined in greater depth (see Fig. 1):

![Qualitative Interview Data: Recurring Themes Raised Regarding the Development of Communication and Social Skills](image)

**Fig. 1:** Data from adult participant interviews showing recurring themes discussed in reference to the impact of the arts on the development of SEN learners’ communication and social skills, where n=10.
All 10 participants interviewed discussed the power of the arts in **removing barriers to social and communicative engagement.** For each participant, and indeed each case, the ‘barriers’ were contextually specific, mostly relating to the nature of the SEN learners had. For example, T1, T5, AP1 and AP2, work predominantly with learners who have Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASCs), therefore the barriers discussed encompassed social and language skill deficits. AP1 stated:

> We have witnessed students, who rarely contribute in class, or have been considered withdrawn and disinterested, or, because of their condition, find it hard to 'get the words out', excited and engaged by theatrical games and exercises enough to speak and share. Teachers have often been surprised by their ability to listen, and take turns in our sessions, which they find difficult in other situations (Appendix 3).

Sellman supports these findings, stating that:

> ...arts projects can do much to alleviate the distress and marginalisation experienced by some people with special needs and disability as well as help them make and build social relationships (2012, p.11).

There is therefore perhaps a suggestion in both the literature and the data that the arts provide some form of safe environment, which helps remove the barriers and thus facilitates social interaction and communication. AP3 contributes to this notion by discussing the levels of engagement that encourage the social and communicative barriers to lower in a way that may not be achievable in other learning contexts:
...I think that because of this motivating factor of the arts being exciting to kids, they are willing to do things again that in other contexts they may not be willing to do. Like, speak to one another in an appropriate way (Appendix 5).

Data from observations helped to corroborate these findings, with thick description providing evidence of learners interacting and communicating confidently with both adults and peers:

There is a sense of real social engagement, displayed through turn taking, ensemble activity and peer encouragement. Also, the voice of the individual is valued and able to come through. This also provides multiple opportunities for learners to excel. Some appear more proficient at the physical aspects of the show-back, whilst others express themselves verbally with confidence (C1, Appendix 6).

Not only does this extract demonstrate the specific indicators of social engagement displayed during an arts encounter, such as ‘turn taking and ensemble activity’, but it also links with another theme from the data: **multiple opportunities to communicate and contribute**. At the latter end of the 20th Century, Robinson championed the arts and their capacity to offer multiple opportunities for SEN learners to communicate: ‘The arts provide a variety of alternative modes of communication for such children in say, drama, dance and music’ (1982, p.103). The data suggest that the multi-modality of the arts in relation to communication enabled SEN learners in each case to demonstrate their skills regardless of communicative barriers. T4 and TA1 provided practical examples when interviewed regarding the involvement of their learners in musical activity. Their group comprised of both non-verbal learners and those trying to be verbal, and the example illustrated their ability to demonstrate and develop their communicative skills through song and signing. T4 explains further:
...we do it through signing as well so that even the pupils who can't sing, they join in by the signing, singing through their hands. ...that has also made a massive impact on some of the other pupils as well because we have some kids who can verbalise but the speech is not clear, so by making it up with the signing, they are gaining in confidence as well (Appendix 5).

Also evident in T4’s comment here is the subsequent impact that collaboratively developed communication through the arts can have on learners’ confidence and self-worth. This opinion was shared by 50% of participants interviewed (see Fig. 1) and is also reinforced by the literature, with Smith maintaining that, ‘Collaborative learning enhances communication skills and can build self-esteem’ (2013, p.48).

100% of participants interviewed discussed the theme of the arts as a platform for teamwork and social interaction. This theme was echoed in questionnaire responses, with one teacher stating that, ‘...the arts sessions...provide a time and place for meaningful peer group interaction and a natural platform for developing social skills and social interaction’ (T5, Appendix 3). When analysing observation and interview data in greater detail it became evident that the arts were perceived to be an appropriate medium for modelling, practising and repeating social interactions with SEN learners. The following extract from observation data demonstrates this point in practice:

Social interaction is modelled and encouraged through the performance and ensemble elements. The students are able to practise turn-taking, listening to and watching others, and self-discipline whilst rehearsing the piece (C3, Appendix 6).
Further comments from participants during interviews helped corroborate these findings such as, ‘...I think the whole teamwork thing was a huge opportunity for them to develop their social skills, which they wouldn’t have done as comfortably in a different set-up’ (T1, Appendix 5) and ‘We do lots of drama because we try to interact with them and it’s modelling that basic interaction’ (T2, Appendix 5). The latter comment came from a participant who works with learners who have PMLD and are therefore (in some cases) unable to initiate social interaction themselves. Peter identifies the significance of experiences with the arts (Drama in particular) with these learners stating that:

It [Drama] can offer vital social play opportunities... providing a ‘learning how to do it while doing it’ approach to participating more meaningfully in a social world and leading towards greater social awareness (2003, p.21).

Quantitative data from questionnaires, revealed a discrepancy of 10% in opinion between the two areas of skills development, with the perception of the impact of the arts on communication skills being marginally less than that of social skills. An interesting comment, which assisted in the analysis of this difference in opinion, revealed that the impact of the arts on the development of SEN learners’ communication skills ‘...is dependent on how sensitive, flexible and understanding the practitioners are to the needs of the pupils, considering the difficulties that Autistic pupils have with communication' (T1, Appendix 3). This was an interesting line of inquiry as the comment alludes to the importance of the role of the teacher/facilitator in the process of skills development. Kempe strengthens the significance of this opinion, raising concerns that adults working with learners with SEN can be tempted to speak and act for them, therefore inhibiting the development of their independent communication
(2005, pp.157-60, cited in Kempe, 2013, pp.164-165). T2 also raised this concern during his interview, discussing the significance of the teacher’s role in recognising and encouraging the (sometimes) very marginal and slow process of progress in the communication skills of their learners with PMLD (Appendix 5). Therefore, although the data provided evidence of learners developing independent and individual communication during and through their arts experiences, it also suggested that the role of the teacher/facilitator is significant in this process. This will be investigated further a little later in this chapter.
4.2 RQ2: To what extent do the arts promote the development of SEN learners’ creativity and arts proficiency?

Quantitative data from questionnaires revealed that 100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the arts promote the development of SEN learners’ creative skills, yet opinion was less unanimous in relation to arts proficiency: 30% strongly agreed, 60% agreed and 10% neither agreed nor disagreed. Qualitative data from interviews and observations allowed for deeper analysis of participant opinion and pedagogical practice. The same process of analytical coding was applied to the interview data; as a result, four themes emerged for closer critical analysis (see Fig. 2):

100% of participants discussed the arts as a medium for SEN learners to demonstrate their creativity, however both interview and observation data uncovered many caveats in relation this process. Caveats were, again, related to the
distinct nature of learners’ SEN and the subsequent significance of the role of the teacher/facilitator in differentiating appropriately to enable them to demonstrate their creativity through the arts. AP2 clarifies this process stating that, ‘Through a careful framework of exercises you can create a safe environment for the learners to really explore their creativity’ (Appendix 3). Corroborating opinions were also expressed by T3 and T6 in their questionnaire responses, where they added that the learners are more likely to demonstrate their creativity in an arts lesson/workshop when they feel confident and comfortable in their environment and in front of others (Appendix 3). Whitehurst provides further justification for a bespoke approach to the arts with SEN learners, explaining that the ‘...challenge lies in the fact that many children with learning difficulties palpably lack confidence in their own creative and communicative abilities’ (2007, cited in Kempe, 2013, p.164). Therefore, it could be argued that the role of the teacher/facilitator is, very important in creating the right circumstances in an arts lesson in order for learners to demonstrate their creativity confidently.

Observations provided practical examples of situations where learners were comfortable and therefore confidently demonstrating their creative skills. In Case 1 this appeared to be achieved through the strategy of working ‘privately in public’ (individually amongst others):

...learners reenact waking in the morning in different ways but present this as an ensemble. Working privately in public. Different styles of music stimulate the quality of the movement and learners respond playfully to this, again demonstrating different levels of self- and audience awareness as well clear pleasure in the execution of the task (Appendix 6).
The structure of the activity was evident, yet with freedom for individual creative expression. Also, learners did not have to ‘perform’ individually, which alleviated fears and created a safe environment in which to improvise.

It was clear from all observation data gathered that the SEN learners appeared to find the arts **fun and engaging** and therefore seemed more **motivated to progress**. During an observation of an ensemble music session (Case 4), two SEN learners who had abstained from participation began to engage in the work, unaware that they were being observed (Appendix 6). Both appeared to be enjoying the lesson from a distance, one occasionally joined in with song lyrics whilst the other moved along to the music, therefore demonstrating the power of the arts in stimulating engagement. Interview data also revealed participants’ perceptions that the fun and playful aspects of the arts help facilitate the development of SEN learners’ creativity and arts proficiency. Comments such as, ‘...they’re laughing and having fun so they want to do it’ (AP1, Appendix 5), ‘...they are playing and they’re having fun and it’s doing that in a controlled, structured way, which enables you to get all of this out of them...’ (AP2, Appendix 5), and, ‘They do that more in an arts situation because they enjoy it. It’s knowing that it’s not just handing it to them on a plate’ (T6, Appendix 5), help support this notion. Peter states that:

The arts are inherently **playful**: they thrive on energizing the individual, on encouraging discovery of possibilities, allowing for exploration and experimentation, with practice time to enhance and consolidate knowledge, skills and understanding (1998, p.154, italics in original).
It could therefore be suggested that the exploration and experimentation Peter discusses here is an aspect of the arts which allows SEN learners the freedom to make creative choices. 8 of the participants interviewed described the arts environment as one that helps **facilitate creative choice** for their learners due to a sense of freedom from right or wrong answers that the arts allow. T3 expressed this clearly, stating that, ‘I think that the arts can be interpreted in so many ways, ...there is not a right or a wrong way of doing things’ (Appendix 5). Harland *et al.* corroborate this opinion stating that in arts lessons:

> ...pupils conveyed a sense of ease in their confidence to experiment ...this indicated a sense of relief, if not liberation, that there was at least one area of the curriculum where success was not based on providing categorically right or wrong answers (2000, p.111).

In light of this research it could be argued that the arts reflect and respect the individual creative expression of the learner and are therefore inherently inclusive. T2 also provides an example from his own practice of a learner with PMLD in his class who makes independent creative choices during sensory stories:

> Another student is very musical and engages well as it’s the main motivator so ... he has to move his head and use motion – that’s what he uses to cause a reaction to him. Switches are linked to musical clips and sound effects, used in sensory stories. There is usually an opportunity for him to use his switches – he has the song split into five parts. He joins in the activity even though he cannot play the instruments (Appendix 5).

The following extract from the observation data provided an additional example of how the arts facilitate creative choice (aided by assistive technology):

> Crocodile song. Assisted through snappy percussion instruments. Learners can use the instruments independently and with assistance, whilst others engage in
the song through assistive technology to enable their creative contributions. They are encouraged to use the instruments and/or assistive technology to express themselves independently to the music (C6, Appendix 6).

In both examples, the medium of the arts provided a platform for independent creative choices to be made. Questionnaire comments helped provide additional evidence of learners expressing creative choice through the arts, such as T5 who links this process to the experiential and participatory nature of the disciplines:

Through repeated sessions pupils are able to firstly experience situations, leading to participation, which results in choice making of favoured creative outlets where pupils can indulge and indulge themselves in whichever creative area they choose (Appendix 3).

These findings appear to link with a notion, expressed earlier in this chapter, of the capacity of the arts to offer multiple entry points for SEN learners to demonstrate their skills.

Although 90% of participants agreed that use of the arts with SEN learners promotes their **proficiency in arts disciplines**, qualitative data revealed that this appeared to be a lesser-desired outcome than that of the impact on skills and holistic development. In the first instance, questionnaire data helped support this notion, with several participants identifying that the process of developing SEN learners' arts proficiency is longer than that of skills development. However, despite arts proficiency appearing to be a less favoured outcome, many participants provided examples of learners being able to 'perform' in front of others more confidently. This was also perceived to be of
reciprocal benefit to adults and peers working with SEN learners due to the impact on perceptions of their capabilities. T4 stated that:

With the choir, it's getting them out into the community and getting people to recognise what they can achieve. People can see what they can achieve when given the opportunity (Appendix 5, my italics).

AP2 also discussed the complexity of some of the acting work he has observed from SEN learners he has taught, explaining that, ‘... a lot of the stuff they do is a lot more complex than any actor could do’ (Appendix 5). This was a very interesting finding in light of the notion, expressed by Rix, that people with disabilities and SEN are more often the objects of creative products, as opposed to creators of such products themselves (2003, cited in Sellman, 2012, p.11). In this way data findings suggest that the arts provide a platform for challenging perceptions of SEN learners’ artistic abilities.
4.3 RQ3: What role does the teacher/facilitator play when using the arts with SEN learners?

Quantitative data from questionnaire responses provided interesting results in response to the final research question. 100% of participants strongly agreed that the role of the teacher/facilitator is important when using the arts with SEN learners, yet opinion varied on the notion of the role being ‘specialised’ (see Fig. 3):

**Fig. 3: Data from adult participant questionnaires showing opinions in response to question 6, where n=10.**

Further qualitative data was required to provide deeper insight into the nature of the role in practice and to explore the range of opinions held by participants. Again, the interview data was useful in facilitating this critical insight, with four themes emerging in relation to this third and final research question (see Fig. 4):
Across all 6 of the 7 cases where observations were carried out there was evidence of arts lessons planned and implemented in a **bespoke, scaffolded and structured** manner in order to meet the individual needs of the SEN learners. A pertinent example of this approach to arts pedagogy was observed (Case 6) where music, song, action and props were used to teach numeracy skills:

The medium of the song is visibly stimulating and engaging for learners who respond when their turn in the song comes around. For some this is demonstrated through their ability to look at the correct number, for others it is the ability to place the correct amount of monkeys into the toy crocodile. The song and storytelling are vehicles that provide an engaging structure for the curriculum delivery (Appendix 6).

Not only was the structure (inherent in the song) engaging, but also the teacher had clearly tailored the activity to each individual learner so that participation and

Fig. 4: Data from adult participant interviews showing recurring themes discussed in reference to the role of the teacher/facilitator, where n=10.
demonstration of progress could be supported. This was achieved through the use of learning aids, such as sensory stimulants (water and props, for example), prescribed TA support and teacher intervention. It could therefore be suggested that a key facet of the teacher/facilitator’s role is in differentiating approaches. Sellman provides further justification for this, explaining that, ‘As the “special needs” population is not a homogenous group, no single strategy exists, creative or not, that will meet the needs of every learner with special needs’ (2012, p.3).

Interview comments helped corroborate these findings, as several participants were able to provide personal explanations for planning bespoke arts lessons for their SEN learners. T2 shared an interesting viewpoint:

In special needs settings, we’re good at being lateral thinkers and you have to use different routes to get to the same point. Whereas in mainstream teaching they are more subject-specific, they’re more traditional, whereas that approach doesn’t work for our students (Appendix 5).

This comment suggested the need for the teacher/facilitator to apply a degree of creative thinking when developing appropriate pedagogical approaches for SEN learners, which could be seen to align with the multiple creative modalities inherent in the arts. T4 and TA1 also discussed the importance of thinking creatively about arts pedagogy and pitching strategies at the right level in order to meet the needs of their range of SEN learners (Appendix 5). In this way, the teacher/facilitator is perhaps important in developing a sense of safety via tight structuring in order to support the needs of the learners. This approach could also help create the right context for the aforementioned social, communication and creative skills to be developed via the arts.
Confidence in using arts approaches was another key theme that arose from the qualitative data. This also appeared to be the area where the divide in opinion, indicated within the quantitative data (see Fig. 3), in relation to the specialised nature of the role, surfaced; some participants expressed the need for training in the arts, whilst others maintained that confidence in using arts pedagogical approaches should be an existing integral part of the SEN teacher/facilitator’s role. AP1 offered her perspective:

...what I would like, if you could give it in a bottle, it would be to give that organic, comfortable feeling, which I’m not sure you can get without having an arts background or having trained, I’m not saying having trained necessarily in the arts, but having trained in how to use it, specifically Drama for SEN... (Appendix 5).

She was therefore suggesting that confidence with the approaches perhaps stems from specific training in use of the arts with SEN learners. T6’s opinion contrasted with this to a degree as she explained that initial confidence in arts approaches and faith in arts pedagogy is an important precursor to successful training: ‘If you have got the confidence and you’re comfortable to do it, then training will help you, if you haven’t then training isn’t going to touch the sides’ (Appendix 5).

It became apparent when gathering observation data that the teachers who were confident and comfortable with the approaches themselves, appeared to be successful in encouraging learner engagement. Extracts from this data helped corroborate the interview findings, such as: ‘The teacher combines confidence, enthusiasm, patience and a very individualised approach when using the arts strategies’ (C2, Appendix 6), ‘Teacher as a performer adds structure and cues for the learners. Modelling the required enthusiasm, playfulness and creativity’ (C3, Appendix 6), and, ‘The teacher
maintains the pace and controls the dynamics by modelling an enthusiastic and encouraging approach’ (C5, Appendix 6).

Many of the participants, in both their interview and questionnaire responses, highlighted the importance of creating the right environment for successful teaching and learning as a significant part of the teacher/facilitator’s role. T3 summed this theme up in his questionnaire comment, stating that:

The role of the teacher in establishing, developing and maintaining a safe and inclusive creative environment is also crucial in order to develop learners [sic] confidence and proficiency in the arts (Appendix 3).

Closer analysis of the qualitative data revealed that ‘the right environment’ participants were discussing was one of safety, inclusion and engagement, where SEN learners could express themselves. T5 linked this to the process of building a sense of trust through the arts:

I find, once the kids know you get them and you’ve got to them through the arts, they trust you more. ...And it’s by engaging with music and things that they love ...(Appendix 5).

AP2 echoed this perspective and provided the rationale that due to the anxieties SEN learners can experience in their daily lives, the teacher/facilitator must create an environment during an arts lesson where they can express themselves without worry (Appendix 5). Other participants likened ‘the right environment’ to an atmosphere of fun that the teacher/facilitator creates, which can be the catalyst for engagement. An additional facet of this process for the teacher, as discussed by T5 and T6, is the
encouragement of TAs in helping to build this atmosphere. T5 illustrated this process through his interview comment:

It’s using the performing arts for them [TAs] to participate easily and to have a platform to engage with the children they are working with and then feel like they’re making a difference and feel empowered and more confident to work with them (Appendix 5).

Both teachers emphasised the importance of encouraging TAs to invest and be actively involved in the arts approaches and so help contribute to the atmosphere of fun and enjoyment. As Smith points out, it is enjoyment that motivates pupils to learn and should therefore be placed at the heart of the teaching and learning process (2013, p.10).

The final facet of the role that emerged as a key theme from the data was the need for high expectations of learners. AP1 and AP3 as well as T1 and T2 discussed the common urge to expect less of, or to protect, SEN learners when working with the arts due to fears that the approaches may be detrimental or inaccessible to them. However, AP1 described how much easier this is for visiting APs to avoid when they do not have prior knowledge of the learners:

...when we go into a group, we try not to make any assumptions, ...because we’re only there for a short time, we’re not going to avoid exercises, we’re always going to encourage... (Appendix 5).
However, T2 provided an alternate perspective in relation to PMLD learners: due to the slower rate of progress and time it takes to build trust with PMLD learners, a visiting practitioner may not be able to challenge them appropriately (Appendix 5). Therefore, it could be suggested that, in the context of SEN, the teacher/facilitators need to have high expectations of learners, but with a good understanding of the nature of their needs in order to recognise the progress being made. This balance is endorsed by Peter, who states that: ‘Teachers need to work to their pupils’ strengths, so that all may find fulfillment and enjoyment in the arts, whilst developing also areas of relative weakness’ (1998, p.154).
4.4 Evaluation of methodology and research methods

The multiple-case study design was appropriate for this research as it enabled broad analysis across the 7 cases examined and also helped facilitate cross-case analysis. However, it became apparent early in the data gathering process, that in order to ensure depth of analysis it would be best to adopt a single case study in each context. Due to the small-scale of this research study, this was not possible but is a potential consideration for future research endeavors. A single-case study would allow deeper insight into the impact of the arts on SEN learners over a longer period of time, which would be better suited to learners with SEN that impact on their rate of progress (e.g. PMLD learners).

Questionnaires were useful in providing both qualitative and quantitative data; qualitative questionnaire data was somewhat helpful in further illustrating the reasoning behind participants’ positive opinions, yet in some cases comments were limited and ambiguous. In this vein, other qualitative methods used (observations and interviews) were particularly useful in allowing for deeper insight into the individual perspectives of adult participants. However, in relation to RQ3, it would have been useful to include an even balance of teachers, APs and TAs to strengthen the generalization of findings.
5. Conclusions & Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

This study sought to investigate the impact of the arts on SEN learners’ skills (communication, socialisation and creativity) development and arts proficiency, and the role of the teacher/facilitator in this process. It examined the implementation of the arts with learners across multiple key stages and levels, with a variety of ages and with a range of SEN. In this respect, the study was successful in gathering broad data and in accessing multiple perspectives on the RQs. However, although the multiple-case study design helped achieve analytical breadth, time was a limiting factor that prevented deep insight into each case. Despite the limitations of the study, data suggested that the arts do impact positively on the development of SEN learners’ communication and social skills as well as their creativity and arts proficiency. The role of the teacher/facilitator within this pedagogical process was found to be multifaceted and fundamental.

To summarise these findings in greater detail, each RQ will be discussed separately below.

RQ1. To what extent do the arts promote the development of SEN learners’ communication and social skills?

Quantitative data revealed that 100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the arts do promote the development of SEN learners’ social and communication skills. Qualitative data supported these findings in revealing that the nature of the arts lessons and approaches were perceived to create a context where SEN learners could demonstrate these skills, regardless of barriers associated with their SEN. This was also
closely linked with the multiple modes of communication that SEN learners could use. As a result of increased communication learners were able to demonstrate greater social engagement. In this way, the arts could be seen to be key in developing the independent voices and social integration of SEN learners, a priority inherent in WG policy:

All schools should ensure that pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in all aspects of the life of the school and are enabled to have an equal voice. Some young people may need additional support and encouragement, either from a peer or from an adult, in order to participate fully (2004, p.27).

It became clear through observational data analysis that the impact on the development of communication and social skills through the arts was also supporting the holistic development of SEN learners who were seen to be growing in confidence and self-esteem. Data also revealed that, due to the collaborative nature of the arts, SEN learners were regularly able to practise social interaction; the arts operated as a medium for modelling, rehearsing and simulating social situations. Finally, in relation to independent demonstration of communication skills, it became apparent that progress for individual learners was inextricably linked to the nature of their SEN. For some learners, progress in this area can be very slow; therefore it would be difficult to conclude with confidence that the arts are capable of facilitating long-term impact without closer study over a longer period of time.
RQ2. To what extent do the arts promote the development of SEN learners’ creativity and arts proficiency?

Quantitative data revealed that all participants strongly agreed that the arts promote the development of SEN learners’ creativity. Whereas, although 90% agreed that the arts help develop their arts proficiency, qualitative data revealed this to be a lesser-desired outcome. The arts lesson was viewed as an appropriate context and medium for SEN learners to demonstrate their creativity confidently. Data also indicated that the teacher/facilitator’s role in implementing the arts approaches was key to the development of SEN learners’ creative expression. This was related to their ability to create the right environment and select appropriate approaches to unlock and allow learners to demonstrate their creativity freely. Literature supports this conclusion, with NACCCE explaining that: ‘The roles of teachers are to recognise young people’s creative capacities; and to provide the particular conditions in which they can be realised’ (1999, p.11).

Fun and enjoyment were also seen as motivational factors inherent in the arts that encourage the creative engagement of SEN learners and therefore impact upon their arts proficiency. In this way, the arts can be seen to be intrinsically motivating for learners and also key to the encouragement of individual expression. Through arts approaches, individual creative choice was catalyzed; participants also linked this to the arts as a medium that celebrates individual expression in all its forms. These findings also support Kempe’s opinion (although in relation to autistic learners specifically) that:

What was once the received wisdom that people with autism are unable to communicate or interact, have no imagination and lack creativity is, fortunately, rapidly proving to be a popular and disabling myth (2013, p.170).
RQ3. What role does the teacher/facilitator play when using the arts with SEN learners?

100% of participants strongly agreed that the role of the teacher/facilitator is significant when using arts approaches with SEN learners. As discussed in relation to RQ2, part of this role was discovered to be the tailoring of approaches to, and creating the right environment for, the learners and the nature of their individual needs. The study was successful in this respect, as the multiple-case design allowed for the observation of good practice from teachers/facilitators working with a range of learners with complex needs. Peter supports these findings, stating that:

Fundamental is the quality of the teacher-pupil relationship, and the development of children’s sociability and communication, with the establishment of a positive ethos, co-operation, negotiation, and emphasis on diversity and individuality (1998, p.155).

Qualitative data also revealed that it was important for teachers/facilitators to implement the arts approaches confidently in order to elicit positive responses from both TAs and SEN learners. They were perceived to be crucial in modelling approaches, enthusiasm and creativity in order to instill a sense of confidence amongst learners and foster an atmosphere of engagement. Perhaps a limitation of this study was that a contrasting case was not sought out for comparison. Data indicated that some teachers are not naturally confident in using the arts with SEN learners and it would therefore have been interesting to hear and witness further examples representative of this point of view.
5.2 Recommendations

In light of these findings, recommendations can be made for frequent collaboration and collegiate activity between teachers and arts practitioners in sharing good practice in using the arts with SEN learners. This could help ensure that pedagogy is bespoke and tailored to learners’ needs, therefore allowing for maximum developmental impact on skills. In the same vein, access for teachers/facilitators to training in the use of the arts with SEN learners is recommended to ensure that confidence in, and long-term application of, arts approaches is achieved. Smith echoes this recommendation, stating that, ‘The issues surrounding accessibility include not only physical access but also training and preparation for tutors, for example, covering disability equality training’ (2013, p.39).

Recommendations can also be made for further research, firstly into the impact of the arts on discreet areas of SEN over a longer period of time, perhaps through a longitudinal study, where progress can be observed and measured in greater depth. It would also be interesting to witness and measure how transferable the skills developed through the arts, such as socialisation, communication and creativity, are within other educational (or wider social) contexts in order to ascertain whether or not their application is limited to the arts environment. Finally, it is important that researchers continue to seek ways of including SEN learners more directly in the process of educational research. A limitation of this study was that the SEN learners’ views and opinions in relation to the RQs were not sought. Therefore a final consideration for future research would be to acknowledge the voices of the SEN learners in relation to the impact of the arts on their learning and development, thus linking with the priorities
of a transformative research paradigm, which, 'While acknowledging issues of advocacy and objectivity, ...has the potential to contribute to the enhanced ability to assert rigor in the sense that ignored or misrepresented views are included’ (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004, p.4).
References List


# Appendices

## APPENDIX 1: Details of cases and embedded units of analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Number</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Learner Participants</th>
<th>Adult Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1           | Specialist Resources Base for pupils with an ASC within a Secondary School (11-19) | 12 KS4 learners all with an ASC                                                                                 | 1 Teacher (T1)  
2x External workshop facilitators/arts practitioners (AP1 & 2)                                        |
| 2           | Special School (3-19)                                                   | 5 KS4 learners with PMLD                                                                                       | 1 Teacher (T2)                                                                                         |
| 3           | Special Education department within a Further Education College         | 12 KS5-adult students with a range of range of abilities, including those with learning, physical and sensory disabilities and ASCs | 1 Teacher (T3)                                                                                         |
| 4           | Special School (2-19)                                                   | 14 KS4 students with a variety of complex learning needs                                                     | 1 Teacher (T4)  
1 Teaching Assistant (TA1)                                                                                   |
| 5           | Centre for Autism within Special School (3-19)                          | 5 KS4 students all with an ASC                                                                                 | 1 Teacher (T5)                                                                                         |
| 6           | Special School (3-19)                                                   | 6 Foundation Phase students with a range of SEN (ages 4-6)                                                    | 1 Teacher (T6)                                                                                         |
| 7           | Every Day Arts for Special Education (EASE) Intervention Programme, USA. | None                                                                                                           | 1 Programme Manager and former Special Education teacher (AP3)                                         |
APPENDIX 2: Methods matrix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ</th>
<th>Method(s)</th>
<th>Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To what extent do the arts promote the development of SEN learners' communication and social skills?</td>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>6 teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 TA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 APs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-participant focused observations</td>
<td>All learners participants across cases 1-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>54 learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9 adult participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-structured individual interviews</td>
<td>6 teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 TA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 APs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To what extent do the arts promote the development of SEN learners' creativity and arts proficiency?</td>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>6 teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 TA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 APs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-participant focused observations</td>
<td>All learners participants across cases 1-6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>54 learners</td>
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<td>9 adult participants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Semi-structured individual interviews</td>
<td>6 teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 TA</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 APs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What role does the teacher/facilitator play when using the arts with SEN learners?</td>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>6 teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 TA</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>3 APs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-participant focused observations</td>
<td>All learners participants across cases 1-6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>54 learners</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 TA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 APs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX 3: Questionnaire and summary of responses (Cases 1-7).

**SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES**  
**The Arts and Special Educational Needs**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree/disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I feel that the arts help develop the communication skills of SEN students. (you may wish to consider the evidence from your own observations and practice that have informed your response)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please make any further comments here (you may wish to consider your reasons why/why not and/or provide examples):

- **C1 T1:** It is dependent on how sensitive, flexible and understanding the practitioners are to the needs of pupils, considering the difficulties that Autistic pupils have with communication.
- **C1 AP1:** When it comes to Drama this is certainly the case. We have witnessed students who rarely contribute in class, or have been considered withdrawn and disinterested, or because of their condition, find it hard to ‘get the words out’, excited and engaged by theatrical games and exercises enough to speak and share. Teachers have often been surprised by their ability to listen, and take turns in our sessions, which they find difficult in other situations.
- **C1 AP2:** Drama allows the learners to communicate through play rather than having pressure on them through other means.
- **C2 T2:** The arts is how we deliver 80% of our curriculum for PMLD pupils.
- **C3 T3:** I have witnessed many learners make incredible progress in overcoming their fears of performing and speaking in public. Many learners start the courses having developed the habit of speaking so quickly and quietly that it is difficult to understand what they are saying. Encouraging learners to breathe steadily and speak loudly and slowly to increase clarity when delivering dialogue has been the main focus with many students with speech impediments. The sense of excitement and joy from a student they deliver a clear vocal is very visible, leading to an increase in the learner's personal achievement and building self-confidence and self-worth. Parents and Carers have often commented that they have never seen certain individuals be so confident, and have been surprised at the level of communication achieved.
- **C4 T4:** Pupils are more confident in speaking, speech is clearer, more forthcoming and the pupils are able to speak in longer phrases and sentences.
- **C4 TA1:** We have found that the arts has really helped our students with speech and language skills and also confidence.
- **C5 T5:** The sequencing nature of music/songs and the timed responses in theatrical work helps pupils understand appropriate exchanges in communication and gives rise to role playing how we communicate.
- **C6 T6:** It’s all about linking your practice to the learning of your learners. Interest and excite them through the motivation of the arts and you are halfway there to excellent education.
- **C7 AP3:** No comment made.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree/disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. I feel that the arts help develop the social skills of my SEN students. (you may wish to consider the evidence from your own observations and practice that have informed your response)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

65
Please make any further comments here (you may wish to consider your reasons why/why not and/or provide examples):

C1 T1: I think the recent Curious devising workshop helped the pupils to explore their emotions more fully, to work together as a group and overall had a big impact on their social skills.

C1 AP1: We have been bowled over by the generosity of students who may sometimes fight in class, to be able to work as an ensemble, and to want to hear the stories/answers or 'watch the go' of their fellow students. This is social interaction in a framework. Teachers who may think their students do not have the social skills to watch a public performance, have been impressed how the experience has captivated them and aided interaction with the public and amongst themselves. This goes for those on the autistic spectrum and those with emotional/behavioural difficulties.

C1 AP2: Drama is all about teamwork and ensemble, it allows them to work together socially and with confidence.

C2 T2: Again, the arts facilitates interaction, responses and engagement with our pupils.

C3 T3: Learners with autism often struggle with interacting appropriately in a social environment as they are not always able to read emotional signals being presented. The very nature of being part of a performing arts group means that students are constantly given opportunities to interact with others. This has been a very challenging experience for many. By establishing a safe working environment in which to be creative, and having staff who can patiently encourage participation, I have witnessed learners grow and flourish into performers of some extremely engaging work.

C4 T4: Gain in confidence, more accepted, seen for what they can do not as an illness or a label. Co-operative and collaborative subject which leads to establishing friendships.

C4 TA1: It has definitely encouraged our students to be more involved in group activities and again it has also encouraged communication skills and confidence.

C5 T5: The fact that the arts sessions provided provide a time and place for meaningful peer group interaction and a natural platform for developing social skills and social interaction.

C6 T6: Turn taking and anticipatory skills encourage social activity which the children eventually take ownership of and learn how to initiate games.

C7 AP3: No comment made.

3. I feel that the arts help develop my SEN students' creativity.
(you may wish to consider the evidence from your own observations and practice that have informed your response)

Please explain the reasons for your answer above (you may wish to consider your reasons why/why not and/or provide examples):

C1 T1: Given opportunities to develop their imagination and overcome rigidity, pupils can flourish. We had a pupil who took GCSE Art, but refused to work in colour. With considered and sensitive support, he now works in a variety of genre
The Arts and SEN Learners: Impact and Implementation

C1 AP1: People often generalise those with autism as not being able to empathise or use imagination or understand metaphor. We constantly see students being able to be imaginative, creative and even surreal with exercises such as 'what's in the box?' or 'come through this door in the most clever way possible'. It's about giving them fun examples/demonstrations and giving them the freedom to play.

C1 AP2: Through a careful framework of exercises you can create a safe environment for the learners to really explore their creativity.

C2 T2: It provides an important outlet to discover their likes and dislikes and preferences.

C3 T3: To quote AK: "People think that people like us can’t do anything. But we can."

The arts give learners a platform on which to express themselves freely. Be it art, music, drama or dance, I have observed learners become more courageous in their exploration of movement, singing and especially creating characters. A great deal of patient hard work goes into this process as many learners are limited by their disability and it takes time to find a route into accessing certain emotions to effectively interpret and perform certain roles.

Music is one device that nearly always untaps emotion when working with people with disabilities. I often use mirror movement (or Intensive Observation) as a way to create simple choreography. When set to certain music, this very accessible method - where one person copies the action of another - becomes something quite revealing; leading to the participants experiencing certain creative moods and feelings (depending on the type of music being played). It is interesting to note how much more experimental with creative movement learners can become when engaging in this activity when music is added. Music can focus participants, leading to a very deep and intense partner interaction that can be extremely emotionally moving to witness. Some audience members have been moved to tears whilst observing certain individuals - who really struggle to communicate creatively - when using this technique to present a piece of movement work.

C4 T4: Pupils are able to develop skills and transfer them to other situations. Pupils are developing the ability to be creative thinkers, and think outside the box.

C4 TA1: I feel that by our students being involved in the arts they approach tasks and activities more creatively from skills they have learned from arts activities.

C5 T5: Through repeated sessions pupils are able to firstly experience situations, leading to participation, which results in choice making of favoured creative outlets where pupils can indulge and indulge themselves in whichever creative area they choose. Certainly my lower capability students enjoy the two way 'animated' interaction they get in sessions using a performing arts platform and this has allowed them to display a definite liking for live performances in school where previously they would have been unresponsive and passively non interactive.

C6 T6: Once children feel confident and comfortable in their environment they appear to be relaxed to express their creative ideas, and show them to others.

C7 AP3: If by creative we can include choice making, leadership skills, student “voice” or self-expression. Creativity does not automatically include imagination for students with special needs.

4. I feel that through use of the arts with my SEN students, they are becoming more proficient* in the arts.

(you may wish to consider the evidence from your own observations and practice
that have informed your response)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree/disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please explain the reasons for your answer above (you may wish to consider your reasons why/why not and/or provide examples):

C1 T1: No comment made.
C1 AP1: This is hard to quantify. We often see a social change in students from day 1 of meeting them to say day 5, and that can be from trust and enjoyment. We can see that they are exploring things they may not have done before. Certainly some have never performed in front of an audience before and then they do that with us - which shows a greater proficiency. I suppose you could say that with being 'directed' by us when working towards a performance, or being guided by us within a specific exercise they certainly do improve. Instructions such as 'speak loudly and clearly', 'face your audience', 'be more truthful', 'remember the sequence of these events' they are becoming better actors.

C1 AP2: If used regularly the learners gain confidence and become more proficient.

C2 T2: The aim is using the Arts as a vehicle of delivery, but it does lead to more interaction and independent movement/vocalisations from the pupils.

C3 T3: Students at the level I work with have moderate to severe learning and/or physical disabilities. Breaking down the fears of performing that these disabilities can present, and allowing individuals the opportunity to engage in the arts at their own level, has definitely lead to learners to becoming more proficient in their ability to allow themselves to become more creative. A number of learners that have come through arts based sessions have, over a period of time, increased confidence in their own creative ability to go on to do college courses in performing arts at higher levels in order to develop their skills further. Some have also felt secure enough to join local theatre groups, thus developing their proficiency even more.

C4 T4: They need more time to develop skills. They are gaining in skills but it needs to be more consistent.

C4 TA1: They are experiencing things they wouldn’t normally have the chance to. It’s great.

C5 T5: As stated above the two way 'animated interaction' encouraging pupils to participate has allowed them to augment themselves with the use of arts being offered and through stimulating their enthusiasm they have made significant progress within specific art areas.

C6 T6: The children all enjoy taking part in drama, movement, stories and music. This demonstrates a range of skills for each of the children.

C7 AP3: Proficiency in the arts with Special Ed may not look the same as the General Ed population – standards must be scaffolded to reflect specific student success.

5. I feel that the role of the teacher is important when using the arts with SEN students.

(you may wish to consider the evidence from your own observations and practice that have informed your response)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree/disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please explain the reasons for your answer above (you may wish to consider your reasons why/why not and/or provide examples):
C1 T1: I feel that the role of the teacher/support worker is crucial to the success of working in the area of the arts.
C1 AP1: It is vital. Without taking anything away from the incredible job that teachers do in such difficult environments, we have often come across teachers who are limited in their outlook. They say from the beginning ‘this will not work’, ‘they will not do that’, ‘they can't leave their routine’, ‘they will be too anxious’. Of course it is hard to trust us as strangers and they are rightly protective of their students and of course they have known these pupils for potentially a long time and we’ve just met them. However, perhaps if they do not have arts in their background, we can be without support. Simple things like saying ‘do you want to do this?’ to a pupil gives them the option to opt out before they have seen what we do. Some teachers might think the arts is a ‘soft’ approach that does not help. We’ve been in environments with huge physical distractions in the room, conversations happening between teachers, laughing at the pupils, all of which is totally inappropriate for students on the spectrum.
C1 AP2: It’s always important to know how to push a learner or pull back and create the right environment for learning.
C2 T2: Yes- they are the ones who are delivering the sessions!
C3 T3: Students learn from teachers - whether good things or not so good! Through teacher demonstrations, students can often gain insight of how a technique is applied and developed. Learners can question the teacher for further explanations on why things are done a certain way, which can open discussions that lead to an increase in knowledge for the student and possibly the teacher too.
The role of the teacher in establishing, developing and maintaining a safe and inclusive creative environment is also crucial in order to develop learners confidence and proficiency in the arts. The teacher is not only the imparter of knowledge but a model; an example of how things are done; a guider and inspirer; a facilitator and an encourager. One who can understand their learners, meet them at their level and lift them to a level they never thought they could reach.
C4 T4: The teacher facilitates the activity, adapting it and pitching it on the right level.
C4 TA1: In our setting the staff are important to the group to help guide and keep order within the group.
C5 T5: Support staff are able to be ‘gregarious’ in sessions with children which uses the performing arts as a delivery platform, but the teacher needs to navigate the learning appropriately. Staff will look to the teacher to lead a session and provide a platform for the learning needs for the children as opposed to 'putting on a show', which can sometimes be the misconception.
C6 T6: The teacher dictates the pace of the classroom, they lead the sessions, the moods and control the atmosphere hugely.
C7 AP3: No comment made.

6. I feel that the role of the teacher is specialised when using the arts with SEN students.
(you may wish to consider the evidence from your own observations and practice that have informed your response)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree/disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
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Please explain the reasons for your answer above (you may wish to consider your reasons why/why not and/or provide examples):
C1 T1: They need to be more sensitive than normal to the needs of the SEN pupils and be flexible enough to work around those needs i.e. sensory difficulties, anxiety issues etc.
C1 AP1: It depends. You might not have a specialism but you could be brilliantly open to trying new things and using the arts with SEN students. You don't have to have an art background but you need to know techniques and care about those you are working with and be prepared to push boundaries.
C1 AP2: This is a specialised area although many skills and approaches could be passed on to other subject teachers to help them in their practise.
C2 T2: As long as you are adaptable then there is no specific speciality required-as long as you know your pupils and their needs.
C3 T3: A greater degree of patience and understanding is often called for when working with ALN learners. Autism can sometimes present in destructive ways both by loud verbal and visible means or by quiet defiance (which can be equally disruptive). The ability to manage such a wide range of behaviours can be challenging, and ways of coping and dealing with the disruptions in group situations really needs to be part of the teacher's training. (From my teacher training experience, it wasn’t, but it needs to be, especially when so many learners with autistic tendencies are entering into mainstream education).
Also, learning to adjust expectations about the ‘standards’ of the final piece of performance or artwork is important for the teacher to come to terms with. Students with such severe disabilities may never reach a polished performance or presentation, but what is equally important to understand (or more important in many cases) is the journey of self-discovery and achievement the learner has come through to reach the final piece. The attitude of the learner, the application, the determined effort to face the challenges of disability and conquer the fears involved is to be admired and applauded.
Some ALN learners may struggle to have confidence in accessing their imaginations creatively especially when working with improvisation. Many autistic learners live in a very literal world, where the role of the imagination is not easily separated from real life. This means that a degree of verbal or visual prompting is often required when working in this field in order to give the student the ‘keys’ to unlock and explore their imagination.
Cognitively, learners may also struggle to grasp some terminology and theory when presented in its usual academic format. Ways of explaining theory to ALN students often needs to be simplified and explained with fewer, more simple and precise explanations. This can sometimes be an obstacle the teacher struggles to overcome.
C4 T4: Need to understand and use creative approaches and thinking. Need to be able to understand what and why they are teaching. Need to be able to dissect complicated scripts and it relevant and applicable.
C4 TA1: A lot of the time activities will need adapting to make them more accessible and appropriate.
C5 T5: There is perhaps a misconception that use of the arts is an indulgence for those of us who have the confidence and 'egocentricity' to be able to have the skills to perform within class. The use of I.T. has eclipsed the importance that the arts has in connecting with our more lost pupils who may be perceived as 'locked in'. Therefore it is not a case that the performing arts specialized teaching is a 'silver bullet' in helping pupils connect effectively with the learning process .The important fact is that it is as important as, say, I.T., because it fills in the important gaps,
which have been transcended in a child with SEN. Those missed gaps provide huge barriers to fundamental development and learning. Teachers who utilise the performing arts in their SEN teaching are exploring every tool in their ‘teacher’s toolkit. It is consequential therein that they should return positive results with their pupils. SEN teaching is much specialised in some areas and incorporating the use of the arts within this specialised teaching requires good knowledge of a pupil’s condition along with a confident ability level in using their art speciality.

**C6 T6:** I do not feel the teacher needs to have any specialism to deliver arts successfully.

**C7 AP3:** Arts should be accessible to both students and teachers. This means that teachers should receive professional development on how to use the arts even in a general way rather than only artists or arts specialists using the arts with SEN students.
APPENDIX 4: Semi-structured individual interview questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND INTERVIEW PROMPTS</th>
<th>Semi-structured Individual Interviews</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ1 (Communication &amp; Social Skills):</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Do you feel that arts approaches have an impact on the development of SEN learners’ skills?</td>
<td>Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What impact does the arts appear to have on SEN learners’ social skills?</td>
<td>Can you give any examples?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What impact does the arts appear to have on their communication skills?</td>
<td>Can you give any examples?</td>
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| **RQ2 (Creativity & Arts Proficiency):** |                                      |
| 4. Do you feel that the arts approaches have an impact on the development of SEN learners’ creativity? | Can you give any examples? |
| 5. What impact does the arts appear to have on their proficiency in the arts? | Can you give examples? |

| **RQ3 (The Role of the Teacher/Facilitator):** |                                      |
| 6. Is there anything distinctive about the role of the teacher using the arts with SEN learners? | Why/why not? |
| 7. Is that role any different than that which is played when approaching other subjects? | Why/why not? |
| 8. Is this something that all teachers can do without training? | Why/why not? |
### APPENDIX 5: Summary of semi-structured interview responses (Cases 1-7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1 (Communication &amp; Social Skills):</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> Do you feel that arts approaches have an impact on the development of SEN learners’ skills?</td>
<td>Yes x10.</td>
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| **2.** What impact does the arts appear to have on SEN learners’ social skills? | **C1 T1:** Also, I think the whole teamwork thing was a huge opportunity for them to develop their social skills, which they wouldn’t have done as comfortably in a different set-up, in their mainstream Drama lessons.  
**C1 AP1:** Many teachers felt that it would be a disruption to their routine, those with autism wouldn’t be able to cope with that. And they loved it and you even saw development within a week because a trust develops and an excitement develops about the work and having fun. Because I think that’s a huge factor in what you’re looking at, is that drama and work-shopping, even though you might be throwing in some development exercises that they don’t realise are aimed at developing them, they’re laughing and having fun so they want to do it.  
**C2 T2:** They are definitely because...it’s not formal teaching of different subjects it’s just teaching interaction and that’s all the arts is really. We do some painting and mark making/visual art but that is quite difficult for our pupils but we do encourage it. We do lots of drama because we try to interact with them and it’s modeling that basic interaction.  
**C7 AP3:** We think of social skills in the EASE programme as, taking turns, partnering with someone, sharing a piece of paper, material. So, I think that because of this motivating factor of the arts being exciting to kids, they are willing to do things again that in other contexts they may not be willing to do. Like, speak to one another in an appropriate way. |
| **3.** What impact does the arts appear to have on their communication skills? | **C1 AP2:** I think it’s tuning in to the element of play particularly for our stuff. I think it’s it’s allowing them to think about it as 'they are playing', they are not, in effect, realizing that it is a huge part of their development but they just think that they are playing and they’re having fun and it’s doing that in a controlled, structured way, which enables you to get all of this out of them, but I think essentially that’s what it is, it's play and it's enjoyment.  
**C4 T4:** We have non-verbal members of the choir and we have some pupils who are trying to be verbal as well, but we do it through signing as well so that even the pupils who can’t sing, they join in by the signing, singing
through their hands. It’s fantastic, that has also made a massive impact on some of the other pupils as well because we have some kids who can verbalise but the speech is not clear, so by baking it up with the signing, they are gaining in confidence as well.

**C6 T6:** Another big thing we push with our little lot is, taking ownership of their own environment. You see it with children everywhere, they want their coat off so they pull at their buttons and then someone takes their coat off for them. One of the little kids, she has learned to use the toilet and she is trying to get her pants and leggings up by herself but it’s not so easy, so she has a symbol in there, she pulls them up a little bit and then she will ask for help using that. It’s her taking that ownership, taking that command. So, when we are doing more things with the arts, if they want to join in, which they do because it’s a motivating thing, they have to at least gesture or respond to something as opposed to passive engagement. They do that more in an arts situation because they enjoy it. It’s knowing that it’s not just handing it to them on a plate.

**RQ2 (Creativity & Arts Proficiency):**

4. Do you feel that the arts approaches have an impact on the development of SEN learners’ creativity?

**C1 AP2:** It’s massively inspiring just to see and, I was talking to someone the other day about it and a lot of actors would struggle doing what some of these kids are capable and do in front of us. It’s amazing. In fact, a lot of the stuff they do is a lot more complex than any actor could do. Some of them, the imagination, particularly the autistic kids, funny enough because people say that they can’t imagine, but it’s just not true from our experience at all.

**C2 T2:** Another student is very musical and engages well as it’s the main motivator so he uses the ipad apps too, he has to move his head and motion – that’s what he uses to cause a reaction to him. Switches are linked to musical clips and sound effects, used in sensory stories. There is usually an opportunity for him to use his switches – he has the song split into five parts. He joins in the activity even though he cannot play the instruments.

**C3 T3:** I think that the arts can be interpreted in so many ways, music can be interpreted in so many ways, there not a right or a wrong way of doing things. I think it’s having that freedom to explore things sometimes, which some people here really enjoy doing and imagination is something that a lot of people do have difficulty in expressing, even without the disabilities.
5. What impact does the arts appear to have on their proficiency in the arts?

**C4 T4:** With the choir, it's getting them out into the community and getting people to recognize what they can achieve. People can see what they can achieve when given the opportunity.

**RQ3 (The Role of the Facilitator):**

6. Is there anything distinctive about the role of the teacher using the arts with SEN learners?

**C1 AP1:** I think Touchstone have done so well because when we go into a group, we try not to make any assumptions, whereas teachers are often given a breakdown of all the students, he's like this, he's bad at this, he's bad at that. Whereas we might absorb that information but we're never going to be, potentially because we're only there for a short time, we're not going to avoid exercises, we're always going to encourage.

**C1 AP2:** There's a lot of anxiety with SEN that they have in their every day life, and it is, it is almost I suppose, therapeutic or holistic in the way that you can create an environment where they can feel relaxed and comfortable to express themselves and not have the every day worries that a lot of these kids have.

**C2 T2:** Well sometimes they have to know the person they're with as well because even though in some ways they're not very social in others they are because they have to trust who they are with. If a stranger walked in, they wouldn't give them the same response because they know you and they're comfortable with you, as is the same with most pupils. But some of our pupils won't tolerate new voices, new faces. And, they don't know what pushes their buttons. So, that's part of it – they know you, you know them, you know what makes them tick, you know when they're having a bad day or good day. So you get those little tiny bits of knowledge about them so they know what you're going to do next – you're not going to start doing something that they don't like or make them do something that they don't want to do. There's that element of trust and that builds up over time. I have had them for 4 years, which is important because you get to see those tiny steps they make. You need to know how to push them, which you wouldn't know where they were at without a longer journey and repeated interaction over and over again.

**C4 T4:** It's finding the right levels. All through creative teaching strategies from the arts.

**TA1:** At all levels. You can pitch it.

**T4:** My class goes from P4-NC L2c, so I have got...
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Is that role any different than that which is played when approaching other subjects?</td>
<td>C2 T2: In special needs settings, we're good at being lateral thinkers and you have to use different routes to get to the same point. Whereas in mainstream teaching they are more subject-specific, they're more traditional, whereas that approach doesn't work for our students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Is this something that all teachers can do without training?</td>
<td>C1 AP1: No. You can read a book then read how to do an exercise and then teach that exercise to pupils, I suppose. Training as an experience, what I would like, if you could give it in a bottle, it would to give that organic, comfortable feeling, which I'm not sure if you can get without having an arts background or having trained, I'm not saying having trained necessarily in the arts, but having trained in how to use, specifically for Drama for SEN, I think it's the same with everything, you need to have training, but then everyone's an individual and</td>
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massive massive gap under one umbrella in the class.

**TA1:** You can pitch it at all sorts of levels but then you can also tailor it to what the students want and how they like learning.

**T4:** And what they need.

**TA1:** Different bits to suit the different students. Some of the students express dislike for some parts, but then it's turn taking and they have to wait for the bit that they like. But they love it, they like that.

**C5 T5:** I find, once the kids know you get them and you've got to them through the arts, they trust you more. ... 'You get me'. 'If you understand me when I'm at my worst, I'll trust you to teach me, to have a go at what you're trying to get me to do'. And it's by engaging with music and things that they love and stupid nonsense, which is all part of that gregarious performing spirit, that they buy in. I'm not saying that you're a stand up comedian every day, but laughing with them at stuff and using a performance platform in a lesson. Once the kids know you get them, that's key to their progress, absolutely.

**C5 T5:** The half is empowering them to say, 'it's alright to make mistakes'. By using the platform of performing arts, where it's ok to make a fool of yourself, they buy into the kids as well and they make it their own and if they can see the kids enjoying stuff they feel like they are making a difference. It's using the performing arts for them to participate easily and to have a platform to engage with the children they are working with and then feel like they're making a difference and feel empowered and more confident to work with them.

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have these naturally instinctive teachers that don't, that are happy to play and to stimulate, that's always got to be it.

**C6 T6:** I think training can open your eyes and give you ideas but then just as much as the people around you can. No, not everyone can do it, people feel uncomfortable with it, people feel stupid, people haven’t got that about them, I suppose, they’re not interested in it, they think it’s not appropriate. If you have got the confidence and your comfortable to do it, then training will help you, if you haven’t then training isn’t going to touch the sides.
APPENDIX 6: Observation Notes.

C1 – Observation Notes

- Workshops, led by two APs.
- 12 learners all with an ASC (Autistic Spectrum Condition).
- 2 days of arts workshops culminating in an informal ‘show back’ of learners’ work.
- Learners are sat ‘on stage’ in two vertical rows at opposite ends of the space, the audience is end-on.
- Props and audio-visual materials are used to support the structure and heighten the performance value of the piece – all materials were used as stimuli during the workshop phase.
- There are elements of creativity and improvisation (of play) evident in the opening scene. Props are scattered in the space and one-by-one each learner enters the space and tells the audience how a prop of their choice was used to murder the dead dog from the play.
- Facilitators watch, encourage and side-coach learners during the performance – their expectations are obviously high.
- Some learners demonstrate confident use of voice and gesture to communicate (sometimes alone) to the audience. It is clear from the facial expressions and body language of some learners that the audience response is pleasing them.
- Peers/fellow performers are visibly enjoying and feeding off the performances of their peers – some visibly clapping and reacting, demonstrating social engagement and enjoyment.
- One of the learners, reluctant to get involved in the show back, is quietly and unobtrusively coached by AP2.
- Facilitators use strong visual cues in coordinating the show-back. Learners appear to find confidence in this and respond positively and excitedly.
- Acting proficiency is clearly demonstrated by some individual learners. One learner uses mime with precision in order to enact a part of the story narrated by the facilitator and underscored by music. They sneak towards a box and use facial expression and body language creatively and effectively for an intended comic effect.
- It was interesting that when this learner rejoined his peers ‘off stage’, he actively avoided eye contact with audience, placing his hand over his eyes to avoid their gaze. This was interesting since he had demonstrated such confidence when communicating a role on stage. My perception was that the drama and the make-believe scenario, as well as the exercise development during the workshop phase, had contributed to a sense of self-confidence, which allowed him to fulfill his role.
- Clear use of facial expression to communicate emotion from some learners.
- All other performers (learners) watching with respect.
- AP2 takes on various roles in the piece, reading a letter whilst learners mime the reactions of the character in the story. This is accompanied by chairs with large smiley emoticon images on them, depicting ‘happy, sad, angry and neutral’. Performers embody the different emotions depending on which chair they are seated in – the activity scaffolds their creative involvement.
- A scene between the father and son is distilled to two simple lines and is performed by pairs of learners who come up pair, by pair. Again, the chair and image helps them decide which emotion they wish to depict. Some are quite advanced in how
they achieve this, using subtle and sensitive changes in intonation and facial expression. Whilst others enjoy the clowning aspect of the exercise and aim to achieve a comic effect. This element of improvisation coupled with the structure imposed on the exercise appears to have allowed learners to demonstrate their creativity and arts proficiency at their own pace.

- Some learners were able to go one step further and improvise a longer conversation between the two characters – there is evidence of real emotional integrity displayed by one individual and the themes are quite challenging (e.g. divorce & death).
- Creativity – learners reenact waking in the morning in different ways but present this as an ensemble. Working privately in public. Different styles of music stimulate the quality of the movement and learners respond playfully to this, again demonstrating different levels of self and audience awareness as well clear pleasure in the execution of the task.
- Music is clearly a very stimulating tool, which not only stimulates a creative and imaginative response, but also provides structure (a beginning, end and cues the next phase of the exercise).
- The games and exercises used during the workshop phase have obviously been successful in scaffolding the creative responses and communicative opportunities of the learners.
- Individual communication opportunity – each learner comes forward and individually shares their name and what they dislike (in the same way as the character in the story), some of these disclosures provide real insight in to the nature of ASC for the audience members.
- Every learner has their moment to perform and demonstrate their creativity. There is a sense of real social engagement, displayed through turn taking, ensemble activity and peer encouragement. Also, the voice of the individual is valued and able to come through. This also provides multiple opportunities for learners to excel. Some appear more proficient at the physical aspects of the show-back, whilst others express themselves verbally with confidence.
- Learners work physically as a chorus to interpret London landmarks – there is visible collaboration, teamwork and physical contact appears comfortable for all learners.
- The final line, delivered by each learner individually at the end of the piece is taken directly from the autistic character in the play – ‘I was brave’, and the learners indeed were!

**C2 – Observation Notes**

- 5x PMLD learners.
- 1 teacher 4 TAs.
- Sensory Story - Going to Australia.
- Use of props and one-to-one stimulation reinforced by support staff.
- Engagement with senses.
- Toto Land Down Under – music sparks social interaction and engagement with staff and peers.
- ‘We're going to Australia’. Engagement by with each individual learner.
- ‘We have got to pack the bags’. Learners are encouraged to select an item to pack
and place it in the bag. Some learners are assisted and select through support, others can communicate their choices independently.

- Each learner receives a round of applause for each item packed – social interaction through ensemble activity.
- Very much about engaging the senses through the make-believe scenario.
- PP supports each stage of the story as well as visuals e.g. The plane taking off.
- The TAs work together to build the story, feeding in encouragement and description.
- Visibly stimulating learners as the plane takes off and wheelchairs are shaken to simulate this – learners are visible engaged in the story (facial expression, movement).
- Learners placed in a semi-circle and encouraged to communicate. E.g. G’day Bruce, which is programmed into the touchpad ‘Big Mack’ communication aid. The context of the arts lesson encourages and is a platform for social engagement.
- Pictures of the learners are featured in the pp slide, which initiates each turn.
- Learners visibly engaged by the story-telling.
- One learner is able to repeat the lines in the story – clear scaffolding of approach, stretch and challenge for each learner.
- We get to Australia and the teacher distributes sunglasses.
- **The teacher combines confidence, enthusiasm, patience and a very individualised approach when using the arts strategies.**
- The importance of learner voice and personal choice being communicated is clear e.g. Encouragement to choose sunglasses, props etc.
- Engagement with the senses, sun cream is applied to each learner.
- ‘Really warm in Australia’ so learners are stimulated via a soft hot water bottle. A bright light is also used and shone on each learner in turn.
- The teacher uses a didgeridoo with the learners with individual learners encouraged to play by their TAs. Each learner has one and the teacher and TAs circulate each learner ensuring that they can listen and react to the sound of the didgeridoo.
- Learners are visibly stimulated by the sounds.
- Aboriginal dancing is demonstrated via a video and learners are stimulated further through the tapping of brightly coloured sticks.
- Kangaroo hopping. Learners are encouraged to hop their feet. They are simultaneously stimulated by a soft cloth. TAs are critical in encouraging the eye contact, movement and in singing to learners.
- Koala’s eating eucalyptus leaves. Eucalyptus is provided for learners to smell.
- Kookaburra song is next, supported and further stimulated through the use of sensory props - feather boas. Teacher sings to and dances with learners and one learner flaps his own arms in response.
- **Crocodile song. Assisted through snappy percussion instruments. Learners can use the instruments independently and with assistance, whilst others engage in the song through assistive technology to enable their creative contributions. They are encouraged to use the instruments and/or assistive technology to express themselves independently to the music.**
- One learner is bed ridden yet still stimulated and encouraged by the teacher and TA.
- Swimming in the Great Barrier Reef. Blue material is used and shaken over the top of each individual learner. Water spray is also used and learners are encouraged to select a fish – expression of personal and creative choice. The learner’s ‘voice’ is valued and encouraged.
One learner knows that the water sheet is coming and visibly covers his face. This is accompanied by music and scent.

Around the campfire with Vegemite sandwiches, music. Learners are encouraged to taste the Vegemite. There is also fire scent.

Individualised provision put in place. E.g. One learner would only allow scent for three seconds counted out by the TA.

Waltzing Matilda ends the session – each learner engages in the song in their own way e.g. making sounds, using percussion, and/or through the aid of their TA.

C3 – Observation Notes

- 1 teacher and 3x TAs.
- 12 learners.
- Semi circle set up. New person in the group is welcomed with a clap.
- Each person answers the register and delivers a line from the performance they have been rehearsing, *James and the Giant Peach*.
- Learners all have roles and are keen to share their performance – there is a sense of pride and confidence in this.
- **Social interaction is modelled and encouraged through the performance and ensemble elements.** The learners are able to practise turn-taking, listening to and watching others, and self-discipline whilst rehearsing the piece.
- Singing as an ensemble – learners visible working together socially as well as communicating with their ‘audience’.
- Ensemble lines are encouraged.
- **Teacher as a performer adds structure and cues for the learners.** Modelling the required enthusiasm, playfulness and creativity.
- LSAs sing as well as model and support.
- Learners are able to demonstrate characterisation through facial expressions, body language and follow choreography – clearly scaffolded to support their SEN.
- Teacher is continually encouraging and praising individuals for their contribution to the performance. ‘Nice big voice’ - to the learner playing James.
- The character playing James knows his lines and mimes with precision and sensitivity to the mood of the background music – arts proficiency.
- Character playing James feeds off the communication of character demonstrated by the teacher. He has a good sense of stage craft.
- Elements of game playing in the performance. Ball team relay over and above head. Learners working together with audience members – yet able to communicate in their own way.
- The teacher has very high expectations for learners and encourages them constantly.
- Two learners are in wheelchairs, therefore TA support and engagement is crucial. It is a truly inclusive performance.
- Every learner has a line and is a valued part to play. A chance to demonstrate their skills.
- Music, props and projections support the learners effectively.
- Learners dance around wheelchairs with choreography. Even wheelchair-bound learners are dancing.
• Learners visibly supporting one another with lines and cues.
• Learners are visibly encouraged within the performance structure to be creative and to demonstrate this within their own personal limitations.
• Smiling faces is a resonant image.

C4 – Observation Notes

• 14 learners in the music lesson.
• 1 teacher, 1 TA.
• Learners stand together as a choir.
• There's a high standard set for their behaviour as an ensemble.
• Warm-ups are accompanied by hand gestures modelled by the teachers – non-verbal learners can get involved.
• The documents demonstrate that the learners instigate everything – creative choice of songs and the way they are sung.
• Learners are transfixed by the teacher. She models negative and positive singing postures and promotes the learning through questioning throughout. This is very much a learning experience.
• There is a range of proficiency. Communication is encouraged regardless of ability or impairment.
• ‘We are all singing. It is inclusive and everyone can get involved’.
• ‘It's very ambitious. Everyone can get involved’.
• Visual cues for the choir and very high standards and expectations.
• There is a soloist and small groups who take key lines - giving them the opportunity to demonstrate their own creativity. They are very supportive of one another during these moments. Social engagement is evident, turn-taking and respect.
• Clear visual cues and encouragement.
• Big risk on teacher’s part too. They are signing out and modelling the expectations.
• Two learners who wish to avoid taking part in the choir rehearsal are dancing along and joining in their own way (one occasionally joins in with the singing).
• Teacher is bubbly and enthusiastic. She has banter with the learners and encourages laughter.
• Teachers language is very technical and demanding. ‘Remember the dynamics of this one - loud and quiet’.
• Day by Day has a soloist. Difficult and challenging rhythms.
• Learners wait patiently for other to sing their solos. Respect for others (social skills) and turn taking.
• Learners have remembered some complicated lyrics and rhythms, supported by the structure of the music.
• Teacher takes an individualised approach for some learners. Encouraging them individually and giving them specific differentiated focus. E.g. learner in a wheelchair who she is encouraging to become more vocal.
• Teacher stops and encourages repetition. The gestures reinforce this. She gives them the time and space to try this.
• Learners without prompting are able to recite the lyrics.
• Soloist is given encouragement, which is then echoed by the whole group.
• High fives all round afterwards.
‘Singing with friends’ is their their favourite thing.
... is encouraged to communicate how they feel about music through an iPad.

**C5 – Observation Notes**

- 5 learners all with an ASC.
- High behavioural issues.
- One-to-one support staff ratio.
- 1 teacher.
- One pupil lies on the resonance board – it’s about stimulation of the senses and social communication.
- Teacher leads by singing and introducing the different rhythms.
- TAs side coach, model and encourage learners.
- Learners visibly engaged in different ways by the drumming and song – some moving to the beat, others drumming, some simply watching the teacher.
- One learner rocks backwards and forwards, another joins in.
- The senses appear to be engaged and the drumming and rhythm visibly relaxes learners.
- Learners react to the teacher’s lead and slow down the tempo of their movement and/or drumming.
- Learners make eye contact with the teacher and the TAs and join in according to their individual ability.
- There is an atmosphere of engagement and calm amongst learners.
- The teacher maintains the pace and controls the dynamics by modelling an enthusiastic and encouraging approach. TAs join in with both the singing and the drumming, helping to build the positive environment.
- One learner dances creatively in response to the different beats, changing their movement quality accordingly. Another uses his arms to start off the exercise. Repetition is important.
- Clear holistic benefits. Learners are calm and visibly happy.
- Options are provided to one learner in relation to his choice of tempo when it is his turn on the resonance board. He is encouraged to communicate his choice via a PECS board. He is therefore able to demonstrate independent choice.
- One learner stamps his feet to the rhythm of the drums.
- Another learner, now seated and drumming, responds through dance and hand gestures.
- Another responds by clapping.
- A long silence is observed by the whole group at the end of each turn, orchestrated by the teacher. Learners are encouraged to ‘focus on the beat, focus on the space in between the beat’ as a means of calming them and tuning them in to the activity.
- Eye contact and visual connections are encouraged by the teacher and the TAs throughout.
- Learners and teaching staff are un-phased by one learner who gets up and begins dancing around the room. He is calmed through touch and eye contact from a TA and brought back in to the activity without any disruption caused.
- TAs encourage participation throughout.
- The safe and engaging environment is built and facilitated by the teacher and TAs.
C6 – Observation Notes

- 5 TAs 1 teacher 6 learners.
- Morning register through song. Learners respond with their names and the Welsh response. My name is.
- Circle set up.
- Song in Welsh to encourage verbal communication on an individual level.
- ...is encouraged to use sign language to communicate in the song.
- PECS are used to differentiate for another learner. She gets to choose the song or the rap using PECS.
- The teacher leads the rap.
- TAs support in the singing and encourage the individual interaction and communication with the teacher either by modelling or physically encouraging the sign language.
- Some are visibly engaged and contributing by tapping and singing. There are entry points depending on the level of ability.
- Teacher is hugely animated.
- The register has a song, which is repeated. The song is engaging and visibly well liked by the learners.
- Maths through music and props. Exploring the numbers with various sensory mediums to support and differ triage according to their needs. E.g. Apples to count. Counters.
- One learner has a magnet board.
- One learner has the support of an eye gaze supported by the TA.
- This is very much a group/whole class exercise.
- Five little speckled frogs is the medium for assisting the learning.
- A tray of water is used to add to the sensory experience. At each stage in the song, each individual learner is encouraged by their TA to deduct their own personal item.
- Some learners are assisted in selecting the right number which either represented visually or as a prop.
- Communication and social skills are encouraged through the call and response structure of the song. It allows learners to participate according to their level of ability and physical/cognitive constraints.
- Song 1 - Isaac Newton, Isaac newton, Discovered gravity, underneath the tree, the apple fell down, the Apple fell down and landed on his knee.
- The teacher and TAs have high expectations of learners individually encouraging them at each stage of the song.
- The props help learners visualise the items and scaffold their choice of the correct number symbol.
- Hungry crocodile. Enacted by the teacher and a crocodile toy.
- One learner repeats the words of the teacher and joins in the lines she says.
- Soft toys (monkeys) are distributed amongst the learners. Counting in unison is encouraged and by the TAs.
- ‘Six little monkeys sitting in a tree’ song is used and each learner is encouraged to place their monkey in the crocodile toy.
- The medium of the song is visibly stimulating and engaging for learners who respond when their turn in the song comes around. For some this is demonstrated through their ability to look at the correct number, for others it is the ability to place...
the correct amount of monkeys into the toy crocodile. The song and storytelling are vehicles that provide an engaging structure for the curriculum delivery.

- The structure of the start and end is also accompanied by visual signing of the numbers and both TAs and the teacher contribute to this.
- There is a clear finish to exercise. Visually reinforced.