

USING VISUAL ART-BASED INTERVENTIONS FOR A PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENT WITH DIFFICULTIES IN PERSEVERANCE, ATTENTION, AND CONCENTRATION

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Abstract: Primary school teachers in Slovenia are regularly confronted with a large number of students with special needs who show deficits in perseverance, attention, and concentration. Therefore, considerable professional support is required to provide an inclusive approach to visual art-based activities, including art-based interventions. In this study, a 12-step qualitative action research programme was conducted over a 3-month period in order to help with the integration of a 10-year-old boy who had deficits in individual learning areas, such as perseverance, attention, and concentration. Our results show that art-based interventions using different visual art areas, techniques, materials, expressive methods, and concepts in art classes had a positive effect on the student's perseverance, attention, and concentration abilities. During the study period, his concentration and perseverance levels improved. He also accepted the fact that effort and perseverance are essential to complete a work of art, leading to better quality art and personal satisfaction.

Keywords: visual art-based interventions, visual art teaching, perseverance, attention, concentration problems, primary school

INTRODUCTION

According to various guidelines in Slovenia, a child characterised with perseverance, attention, and concentration deficits is considered “deficient in individual areas of learning”, and is therefore entitled to various forms of support or adjustment within school activities (ZUOPP, 2011; PONDPP, 2013; KOVSPOMPP, 2015). Primary school teachers can use a variety of approaches from different fields to help these children, including visual art-based therapeutic approaches (Kay, 2020). Visual art-based interventions can provide opportunities to overcome barriers in the school environment that impede academic success (Kariž, 2008; Fenner, Ryan, Latai and Percival, 2017). It can promote appropriate social behaviour and healthy affective development by making students more receptive to learning, as well as increase their awareness of their own social and academic

potential (Rubin, 1999; Malchiodi, 2011). These interventions can help students achieve appropriate levels of social and academic success, thus improving self-motivation (Pivac and Zemunik, 2020).

Deficits in specific areas of learning

Children with severe learning difficulties are those who have severe difficulties in reading, writing, spelling, and/or arithmetic, despite average or above-average intellectual abilities: these difficulties occur due to known or unknown disorders, or differences in the functioning of the central nervous system (Milič Babič, 2020). These children are characterised as *children with deficits in individual learning areas* based on the criteria for defining the nature and extent of deficits, obstacles, or disorders in children with special needs (Povše, 2017). Additionally, these children experience de-

velopmental delays and/or disorders of attention, memory, thinking, coordination, communication, social skills, and/or emotional maturation (Petek, 2018). Learning-related deficits impair cognitive processing of verbal and non-verbal information, impede acquisition and automation of academic skills, and have lifelong effects on learning and behaviour (Vovk Ornik, 2015). The main causes of deficits in individual learning areas are internal (i.e., they are not primarily caused by inadequate instruction and other environmental, visual, auditory, or motor impairments). However, neurological and intellectual developmental disorders, as well as behavioural and emotional problems or disorders may occur simultaneously (Vovk Ornik, 2015).

Attention and concentration

Attention is a cognitive mechanism that allows us to focus on an external or internal stimulus. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between passive (involuntary) and active (conscious) attention. Passive attention arises involuntarily, and our attention is directed to something that interests us most at that moment (Losoncz, 2020). On the other hand, active attention is consciously directed and focused on a particular point over a long period of time, also known as concentration. This is the ability to work in a focused manner, or to persist with a stimulus (Mravlje, 1999; Sörqvist and Marsh, 2015).

Attention difficulties affect the learning performance of students (Košak Babuder and Velikonja, 2011). The predominant problems of individuals with short attention spans are that their concentration and organisation abilities are weak and that they are forgetful (Puyjarinet, Bégel, Lopez, Dellacherie, and Dalla Bella, 2017). These individuals have a slow cognitive pace, process information slowly, and tend to be apathetic (Lin, Chang, Hsieh, Yu, and Lee, 2021). They are not restless or impulsive at work, so they do not disturb the classroom/environment because they are less noticeable. Their learning performance is poor as a result of issues with focus and maintaining attention (Rabiner, Carrig and Dodge, 2016). While solving tasks, they make mistakes that are

not due to ignorance, and the number of errors increases with the amount of work done and the duration of the task (Žunko Vogrinc, Šilc, Beljev, and Pušnik, 2018). They cannot monitor or perform multiple activities at the same time, and are often distracted by insignificant stimuli and have difficulty switching from one task to the next. These students cannot hear instructions or read them incompletely, they are not focused on the task or activity, and often do not complete tasks at all (Miklós, Komáromy, Futó, and Balázs, 2020). Specific learning difficulties are also common. In interpersonal relationships, they withdraw in social situations and are often overlooked by peers (Košak Babuder and Velikonja, 2011).

Perseverance

Perseverance is crucial for students to achieve their goals. It acts as an inner strength that helps them ignore and overcome obstacles and keep going (Van Doren et al., 2019). It is essential because individuals need perseverance to overcome diversity, criticism, and obstacles. This trait needs to be learned and then further developed (Wilson, Bennett, Mosewich, Faulkner and Crocker, 2018). An individual's ability to persevere with a task, path, or quest can gradually improve. Once they have managed to persevere with even the simplest of goals, they will be able to last even longer the next time (White et al., 2016). Perseverance is especially important for child development because life is full of complications and perseverance helps overcome them (Barnes, 2020). Duckworth (2016) asserts that perseverance is a necessary trait that successful students have, including the ability to see failure as a positive learning experience and to try again until they achieve their goal. Such students understand the value of hard work, take responsibility for their own academic progress, and are less likely to blame others for failures. In fact, academic success depends not only on cognitive ability, but also on perseverance and associated traits such as motivation, patience, concentration, and resourcefulness (Ajjawi, Dracup, Zacharias, Bennett, and Boud, 2020). Persistent students are easily recognised in school because they set goals and commit to not giving in to

frustration or fear of failure (Fokkens-Bruinsma, Canrinus, Hove, and Rietveld, 2018). They think positively and believe that they can achieve their goals. They know that understanding increases in proportion to the effort that they are willing to put into their work, and they enjoy the satisfaction that comes from accomplishing difficult tasks (Simpkins et al., 2020). It is important for the teacher to determine how long the student's attention span can last in a classroom. Therefore, children must be appropriately motivated for each activity (Bavčar and Lavrenčič, 1996, Devi, Jamaludin and Fitriyadi, 2020), and the learning environment must be adjusted according to the attention span of the student (Bartolac; Novljan and Pavlin, 2022). The learning environment plays an important role in student achievement (Adedigba and Sulaiman, 2020; Akrofi Baafi, R. K., 2020; Gkloumpou and Germanos, 2020), and the school learning environment is typically determined by the atmosphere in the school, available learning resources, school regulations, quality of cooperation between the staff, leadership style of the school, and school values (Jereb, 2011).

Visual art classes

Visual art teaching is an educational process through which students develop important personality traits, including emotional, intellectual, and motor skills (Secker, Heydinrych, Kent and Keay, 2017). It includes education (personality formation) and formation (learning skills, abilities, and senses of visual art), which form the basis for the formation of attitudes, values, and aesthetic expression (UNLVOŠ, 2011). The factors associated with visual art education are verbally activated and translated into works of art (Tacol, 1999). Contemporary visual art education in primary schools involve a specific teaching and learning process in which theoretical and practical work are interwoven (Tacol and Šupšakova, 2019). The acquired knowledge and understanding of visual art concepts is directly tested when students express themselves in a concrete practical task based on their own thinking and experiences, so the test is a reflection of their skills and previous experiences (Tacol, 1999; Parać et al., 2018). Affec-

tive development includes the development of the student's emotional, social, moral, and aesthetic dimensions (Tacol, 1999). It includes the development of feelings (visual, tactile, auditory) and emotions through which a student develops a certain way of experiencing reality, as well as ways of expressing what is experienced, behaviours, aesthetic relationships, the formation of thoughts and attitudes, motivation, and communication skills. Affective development is also associated with experiencing and expressing feelings (Tacol, 2003). Other important social categories for appropriate student development are independence, formation of positive attitudes, empathy, tolerance, self-efficacy, self-esteem, consideration, compassion, perseverance, objectivity, dealing with negative and positive emotions, positive thinking, overcoming negative attitudes, developing various work habits, moral development, understanding others (and for others), and aesthetic development (Tacol, 1999; Johnson et al., 2020).

Visual art-based support interventions

Art-based interventions as a form of professional support includes various forms of art, such as music, dance, drama, and visual art. Their goal is to explore students' emotions, improve their self-esteem, resolve their emotional conflicts, develop their social skills, and improve symptoms of anxiety, self-image, and behaviour (Klarin, Čirjak, and Šimić Šašić, 2020). One of the approaches is visual art-based support interventions (Kariž, 2008; Kay, 2020). This type of support with visual art activities is a process that has its own rhythm and flow. It is a structured and systematically planned treatment for individuals or groups. This precisely-structured framework includes space, time, art materials, and activities that have a degree of predictability, which gives participants a sense of security (Clapp, Taylor, Di Folco and Mackinnon, 2018). The structure of the meetings is constant and usually takes place in three parts. The first part involves establishing a trusting and relaxed relationship between the teacher and the child. The second part is devoted to artistic expression and discussion of the topic, as well as discussion of the artwork created and

the process of creation. In the final part, the events of the meeting are evaluated, the next meeting is planned, and the workspace is cleaned up (Kariž, 2008; Kay, 2020).

Support through artistic activities promotes perception, motor, cognitive, and social skills, and it is suitable for children who have a short attention span and issues related to concentration. The main goal is to alleviate an individual's deficits and promote their strengths (Kariž, 2008; Clapp et al., 2018). The programme should include short-term and long-term goals depending on the timing of activity, purpose, and individual needs. Long-term goals may include increasing self-confidence, improving attention, or reducing undesirable behaviours, while short-term goals are related to a specific activity (Kariž, 2008; Andersen, Klausen, and Skogli, 2019). Consider that the goals of support with visual art-based activities are to improve self-awareness, resolve emotional conflicts and problems, reduce negative emotions and passivity, relax and enjoy the art, increase positive behaviours, and allow free expression. However, the purpose is not to learn fine art skills or create beautiful products, but to help individuals express themselves and become aware of their feelings, emotions, and thoughts in order to better understand themselves and the people around them (Malchiodi, 2011; Koller-Trbović, Mirosavljević and Ratkajec Gašević, 2019). For the development of the student's personality, art education has an important general cultural and pedagogical significance. It promotes and demands observation, memory, creative thinking, visual thinking, critical judgement, motivation, perseverance, independence, self-affirmation, initiative, tolerance, imagination, emotions, technical skills, and motor sensitivity. Thus, it involves the activation of qualitative and quantitative factors such as emotions, intellect, ideas, and motor skills (Tacol, 1999). Research shows that children make the greatest progress in the emotional and social-behavioural domains with the help of interventions based on visual art, since artistic expression can provide satisfaction and joy (Kariž, 2008; Leavy, 2017; Chaudhary, 2018; Shamri Zeevi, Regev, and Guttmann, 2018).

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A review of the literature revealed that there is a lack of research on the use of visual art activities in elementary school art classrooms for students with perseverance, attention, and concentration deficits. Therefore, we conducted a 12-step qualitative action research programme based on visual art in the classroom to support a 10-year-old boy attending 5th grade in primary school who was characterised as a child with learning difficulties (i.e., problems with perseverance, attention, and concentration). The research programme was based on various visual art activities in order to learn about visual art techniques and materials, as well as art motifs (UNLVOŠ, 2011). The focus of the art-based support was on conversation and reflection (expressing opinions, thoughts, desires, feelings), as well as directing the student's attention, concentration, and perseverance in the process of visual art activities (Rubin, 2009; Moschini, 2018). Art activities are designed to enhance the student's affective, psychomotor, and cognitive development (Tacol, 2003), while supporting accuracy, expression of thoughts, emotional states, feelings, needs, desires, and interests (Kay, 2020). Therefore, we focused our research on the following questions:

- 1) How does the process of using different areas of visual art, techniques, materials, modes of expression, and visual art concepts in the art classroom affect the perseverance, attention, and concentration of a student with deficits in individual areas of learning?
- 2) How did the individual in question (student) accomplish visual art tasks using various art materials, artistic expressions, and art concepts? What effect did the art-based interventions have on the student's perseverance, attention, and concentration abilities?

METHODS

Participant

This study focused on a 10-year-old boy attending regular 5th grade classes in an elementary school in Slovenia. He was characterised as a child

with deficits in a specific area of learning, in this case, problems with perseverance, attention, and concentration. Here we present a case study of a 10-year-old child to illustrate how various visual art activities in the art classroom can affect a student's perseverance, attention, and concentration abilities as they solve predetermined learning objectives.

Instruments

During the meetings, qualitative data were collected using an initial and final structured interview in which the student expressed his observations, feelings, expectations, and desires regarding the art-based activities, both before and after each meeting.

Further data was collected using a semi-structured, open-ended observation scheme (Kay, 2020), which contained pre-written statements. After selecting one statement that seemed most appropriate at the time, we observed and compared student comfort at the beginning and end of the session, adherence to agreements, perseverance, attention, and concentration abilities, communication, initiative in conversation, use of visual art materials, motive (through observation, imagination, projections, and memory), incorporation of visual art concepts, satisfaction with the activity, and attitudes toward the artwork (Kay, 2020). A post-activity semi-structured guided interview was used to assess the completed activity against the criteria of the learning objectives. Questions related to the theme and content of the visual art activities were designed in order to provide an answer to our research questions (Mesec, 1998). We recorded all interviews (after receiving consent) and created a transcript of the conversations based on the audio recordings. Upon completion of the activity, the student saved all of their artwork (Kay, 2020).

Research design

Over a 3-month period in 2020, 12 action steps associated with art-based activities were conducted once a week in the art classroom for two school hours (90 minutes). The first meetings were used to gain mutual trust, where we discussed topics

aimed at getting to know ourselves and focused on positive emotions and content (e.g., "I am like this and I like that", "My success day", "My best friend", "A place where I am calm/relaxed"). In the next phase, we addressed negative emotions and content that are difficult for individuals, and focused on experimenting with visual art materials and techniques (e.g., "When I am happy and when I am sad"). In the final phase, we evaluated the meetings, we reviewed the artwork and progress made (e.g., "I am content with myself"), and addressed future perspectives (Kay, 2020). Our main goal was to strengthen the student's perseverance, attention, and concentration abilities, to encourage visual and verbal expression, to support the choice of materials and supplies, to facilitate the release of tension, to promote the expression and perception of feelings through artistic mediums, as well as to increase the student's well-being. All activities were conducted in confidential environment involving the research and the student, and did not include the rest of the class.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the first research question, we were interested in how exposure to different areas of visual art, techniques, materials, motifs, and art concepts in the art classroom affect perseverance, attention, and concentration in students with deficits in individual areas of learning.

Our research has shown that the biggest issues associated with the student's perseverance, attention, and concentration abilities is that he is often disturbed by stimuli in the environment/classroom. As a result, his concentration wanes and he does not persevere in his work, and consequently does not complete the task at hand (i.e., the artwork). Several studies (Kariž, 2008; O'Donnell, Reeve and Smith, 2011) have shown that a child with a short attention span cannot persevere with a task, gets distracted easily, stops activities that have already been started in the middle of the process, and is unable to put in constant effort. In these studies, students needed constant encouragement from the researcher or the teacher to continue the task, otherwise he/she was satisfied with the final product too quickly, or before it was actually complete. In

addition, the 10-year-old boy in our study admitted during one of the first meetings that he could not finish the artwork without help. Thus, it is important for the teacher to create a framework in which the student who lacks attention feels safe (Kariž, 2008; Farrell, 2011). This framework is formed by space, time, visual art materials, and activities that are precisely structured and provide some level of predictability. Previous studies have shown that students continue to work with external encouragement and feel satisfied and proud with every achievement (Barnes, 1982; Arrigon, 2019). Success gives a child a sense that he/she is in control of his/her life, and from this feeling comes a good, or at least, satisfying self-image (Magajna, 2008; Rosetti, 2020). The student in our study also found that the artwork got better as he continued to do it and this gave him a sense of satisfaction.

Previous studies have shown that children make the greatest progress in the areas of emotion and social behaviour through art activities (Kariž, 2008; Leavy, 2017). During our study, we found that the process of using different visual art fields, techniques and materials, motifs and learning about different art concepts in the visual arts classroom had a positive effect on perseverance, attention, and concentration abilities. Step by step, the student pushed harder to create his artwork. The progress made was also evident in his consistency, which was sloppy in the beginning, but he paid more attention to the details of the artwork towards the end of the study. Additionally, considering the fact that he was doing his art tasks in a quiet environment where there were no external stimuli to disturb him, he was focused on his work during the intervention.

Jereb (2011) suggested that the physical learning environment is important for students with learning difficulties and that it should provide them with as few distracting stimuli as possible in order to maintain their concentration and make them feel safe. Problematic behaviour has a negative impact on psychosocial performance and academic success (Runjić, Bilić Prcić and Alimović, 2015). In the present study, we found that the student's concentration and perseverance improved over the course of the intervention. The

student found it easier to accept the fact that creating high-quality visual art requires effort and perseverance. We noticed that he asked for our help several times during the first phase of the intervention, but he continued to work increasingly independently on his artwork.

A goal-directed activity typically helps students with perseverance problems better than relying on the students to set a goal for themselves and insisting that they achieve it (Hudoklin, 2011; Schunk and DiBenedetto, 2019). For such an activity to work, goals must be set that motivate students to achieve them (Tacol, 2003). Ideally, the goal should be visible and feedback on progress towards the goal can help students persevere. During our study, we found that the student's concentration and perseverance improved when he worked with visual art techniques and materials that he was using for the first time, or those that he preferred. He reported that his artwork was more holistic, had more complex content, and contained more detail. Despite the difficulties that arose under these circumstances, he persevered until he successfully achieved what he had envisioned. However, he put less effort into more complex visual art techniques and materials that were less interesting for him because he thought that the product would not be good enough due to his lack of mastery of visual art techniques.

Many students with learning difficulties lack motivation because they do not feel capable enough (Jereb, 2011; Miele, and Scholer, 2017; Gbollie, and Keamu, 2017). Through observation and conversation with the student in the present study, we concluded that the problem with creating a piece of art often lies with the conceptual solutions within the visual motif, rather than the student's sense of incompetence. With each visual art activity, the student revealed and learned something new about himself (Zarobe and Bungay, 2017). He proved himself, especially in situations when the subject was a challenge or a motivation for him to figure out. This resulted in works of art that expressed unusual visual solutions, as well as greater motivation and perseverance in achieving the visual art task.

Several studies (Jereb, 2011; Gbollie and Keamu, 2017; Joe, Hiver and Al-Hoorie, 2017; Abbas and North, 2018; Van Deur, 2018) have shown that students have higher intrinsic motivation when they experience competence in a particular domain and have the opportunity to choose and control their learning. If the content of the visual art task does not excite the student, the teacher offers help or guidance, which makes it easier for the student to continue (Humphries Mardirosian and Pelletier Lewis, 2018; Mctighe, and Silver, 2020). During our meetings, the student realised that it is necessary to be patient and persistent, because effort leads to better artwork (e.g. *“When something did not work out, I pushed hard and did not give up. It was worth it!”*; *“I tried to fix it..., hmm, I’ll try to fix this hand again.”*; *“I will do it!”*; *“I was a little stumped on the colours, I did not know which ones to use. Then I thought about what I could put in the background and did my best.”*; *“After creating the picture, I feel better than before. I am surprised that I was able to do it. Because I thought I would do something different, I thought it would be symmetrical, and I am surprised it could be different (asymmetrical).”*; *“When I was drawing and folding paper, I was the most persistent. This is because I like drawing, I love it.”*; *“When I did something for a long time, I felt like... yeah, I felt like a normal person.”*; *“I did my best because I wanted to see what the artwork looked like in the end. I would like to see what my house would look like in the pyramid.”*; *“I felt very good, I wanted to finish it and I did very well. I like that.”*). This can indirectly lead to a greater sense of self-satisfaction, and satisfaction is useful for academic success (Antaramian, 2017).

In summary, with respect to our first research question, we found that the student progressively gave more input related to the design of the artwork. We also observed progress in his consistency, which was moderate at the beginning, but towards the end of the study period, he paid more attention to the details of the artwork. The student’s concentration and perseverance improved as the study progressed, and he found it easier to accept that the creation of high quality artwork required effort and perseverance.

Our second research question examined how the student completed tasks using different art materials, motifs, and visual art concepts, as well as how his perseverance, attention, and concentration abilities were strengthened. We found that the student was able to complete all the art tasks that were part of the intervention. He showed better perseverance, attention, and concentration when he worked with art techniques and materials that he used for the first time or rarely used, and those that he preferred.

Previous studies have shown that the professional selection of different motives, materials, tools, and working techniques by the teacher, which are attractive and interesting for students, is an important element for maximising motivation (Tacol, 2016; Tacol and Šipšakova, 2019). Consistent with previous studies (Kariž, 2008; Hinz, 2017; Chaudhary, 2018), we observed a positive change in the student’s well-being before and after the meeting, which can be attributed to the satisfaction and pleasure associated with artistic expression. In our interviews, the student expressed that, during our meetings, he realised that it is necessary to be patient and persistent when creating artwork, since this leads to better quality products (e.g., *“If I try, the artwork will work well, but if I do not try, it will not work.”*; *“I can be as persistent in creating as I am in working on the computer. You need a lot of concentration on the computer and when you are drawing if you want to draw something good.”*; *“It was not hard for me to be persistent! I was persistent. perseverance helps, of course. It leads me to see... I am very interested in what the product will look like in the end.”*; *“After the activity, I feel better because I like that I did it (finished it).”*; *“I feel better than before, much better because I succeeded in making the product.”*; *“I really like that we were together and that you helped me with my fine artwork. I want you to be a good teacher.”*). Our findings indicate that the student’s perseverance, attention, and concentration increased progressively through the meetings, especially since he paid more and more attention to the artwork, did not have concentration problems, persevered long enough to finish the product, and included all the content related to solving the visual art-based problem.

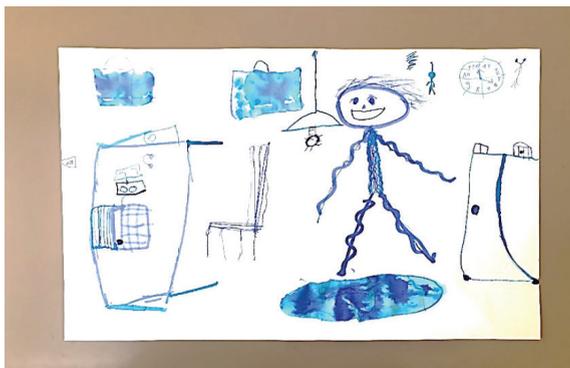


Figure 1: Drawing, light, and dark linear surfaces – “Satisfied self”: a work of art showing the declining perseverance, attention, and concentration of the student. We had to instruct him several times to include peculiarities and details. During his work, he was communicative and showed an interest in discovering the specifics of the art technique.

The main goals of support interventions using visual art-based activities are to mitigate an individual’s deficits and promote his/her strengths (Kariž, 2008; Brown, Cortés Chirino, Cortez, Gearhart, and Urizar, 2020). We found that the student gradually adopted visual art concepts and presented them verbally as part of the evaluation of different artwork, which allowed emotions and experiences to be recorded, and the interpretation of these enhanced the student’s verbal communication abilities. Visual art expression thus revealed important information and new ways of getting to know the student (Kariž, 2008; Öztürk, 2009; Zarobe and Bungay, 2017).

In addition, we also attribute the student’s progress in the areas of perseverance, attention, and concentration to the way our intervention was organised. The sessions were regular and intensive, and the entire programme, which took place over twelve sessions, was constantly monitored and evaluated. We made sure to identify ways in which the student can participate as actively as possible. The one-to-one work quickly created a circle of confidentiality, which was a prerequisite for promoting individual progress in terms of perseverance, attention, and concentration. Working



Figure 2: Architecture and drawing, asymmetry, skeletal spatial formation – “My dwelling on an alien planet”: discernible progress of the student in the completion of the artwork and the complexity of its production (as a consequence, the student showed increased perseverance, attention, and concentration). Without difficulty, he was able to independently and convincingly show the peculiarities and details in connection with the motif and improve his motor skills.

one-on-one also allowed us to fully engage with the student and select different areas of visual art, techniques and materials, artistic expressions and concepts, depending on his needs and interests, in order to promote perseverance, attention, and concentration (Richardson, 2016; Davidow, 2018; Klein, Regev and Snir, 2020).

In summary, the student implemented all of the art tasks as part of the intervention, and showed better perseverance, attention, and concentration when he worked with preferred visual art techniques, or art techniques and materials that he used infrequently or for the first time. The student’s perseverance, attention, and concentration abilities increased over the course of the sessions: he paid more and more attention to the artwork, did not face any concentration problems, persevered long enough to complete the artwork, and processed all of the content associated with the art task.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on our findings, we can conclude that the use of different art areas, techniques, materials, art concepts, and methods of artistic expression in the

art classroom can have a positive effect on perseverance, attention, and concentration in students with deficits in individual learning areas. The more action steps we took, the longer the student persevered in creating high-quality artwork, the more he focused on his work, and the more attention he paid to the visual art process. The student accomplished all the visual art tasks that were part of the intervention, and showed better perseverance, attention, and concentration when he used his favourite visual art techniques and when he worked with techniques and materials that he rarely used or used for the first time. The main goal of using visual art-based activities is to help an individual achieve positive change, alleviate deficits, and promote their strengths through the use of artistic expression in a safe and stimulating environment (Kariž, 2019; Brown et al., 2020).

The disadvantage of the qualitative action research programme used in this study is that the results obtained cannot be generalised. Duration of the research study also poses a limitation, and future studies should aim to observe the efficacy of using visual art-based activities over a longer period of time. Continuous implementation and better involvement of all key individuals from the child's environment (parents, teachers, experts) would allow for further progress and better gen-

eralisability of acquired skills in school and home environments (Kariž, 2008; Masika, Yu and Li, 2020). Given that a qualitative approach provides more freedom that influences a researcher's subjectivity, we are aware that researcher participation can cause additional bias (i.e., the researcher can identify with the people they study and lose focus on the research objectives). At the same time, the student may even adopt certain thoughts of the researcher, which in turn leads to inaccurate research results (Vogrinc, 2008).

The present study also raises the question of the sustainability of the effects of the intervention and the transfer of acquired skills to other subjects. Primary school teachers should focus on the process of creating artwork in art class and less on its final appearance. We need to enhance positive self-image, self-confidence, and satisfaction among students, which will in turn lead to better quality artwork and improve confidence levels. However, based on the results of our study, we can emphasise that the process of support with visual art-based activities can play a significant role in helping an individual with learning deficits realise their potential, despite their issues with perseverance, attention, concentration, and personal development.

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