The arts: a precious part of special education? How principals value and organise arts education in compulsory school for pupils with intellectual disability in Sweden

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ABSTRACT
The intersection of arts education and special education as a field has been described as lacking in unity, partly because the practices of its different stakeholders are embedded in either special education or arts education. This paper investigates how principals prioritise teachers’ qualifications when organising arts education in compulsory school for pupils with intellectual disabilities (CSID) in Sweden, what they perceive the value of arts education in CSID to be and how they organise arts education in relation to cooperation between pupils from CSID and compulsory regular school (CRS). These questions were investigated using a questionnaire, which was answered by 124 principals. The results show that around three times as many principals prioritised specialised arts knowledge over competence in special education. However, the degree to which this occurred varied across arts subjects. A majority of the principals valued arts education for the opportunities it offers pupils to develop generic abilities, such as communication skills, creativity, and imagination. Cooperation between CSID and CRS for arts education appeared to depend on how school leadership was organised. The article concludes with suggestions on how the organisation of arts education could be improved in relation to the two areas of expertise and the idea of inclusion.

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Introduction

Arts education is considered important for the development of cognitive abilities necessary for creating meaning in the world (Eisner 2002). This is one of the reasons why arts education is seen as a significant part of schooling for pupils in need of special educational support. However, it has been argued that the intersection of arts education and special education as a field is lacking in unity, partly because the practices of its different stakeholders are embedded in either special education or arts education (Malley and Silverstein 2014). Moreover, research on arts education for pupils with disabilities is sparse (Crockett, Berry, and Anderson 2015; Crockett and Blakeslee 2018; Malley and Silverstein 2014). An overview by Crockett, Berry, and Anderson (2015) indicates that research in this field mainly consists of professional commentaries, such as literature reviews, programme descriptions, critiques and conceptual works, and that studies based on empirical data are...
lacking. Therefore, as Horowitz (2018) argues, there is a need for more foundational and basic research in this field.

Overviews of the limited research conducted at the intersection of special education and arts education indicate that arts education fosters a range of abilities among pupils with disabilities, such as furthering their social, cognitive and communicative development, promoting motor skills and encouraging engagement and collaboration (Crockett, Berry, and Anderson 2015; Allahverdiyev, Yucesoy, and Baglama 2017). However, these overviews highlight two issues. First, they address both education in the arts (artistic subjects as visual art and music) and through the arts (arts-inspired instruction and arts-based activities integrated into other subjects). Second, as Eisner (2002) noted, arts education does not have a value in itself; it takes both meaningful content and high-quality instruction to facilitate learning. Instruction at the intersection of arts education and special education involves two areas of expertise. However, there is a lack of professional unity between the advocates of these two areas on how to engage students with disabilities in meaningful learning (Malley and Silverstein 2014). Furthermore, little is known about the consideration given to these two areas of expertise when organising arts education for pupils in need of special educational support. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the factors that influence how principals organise arts education for a group of pupils who are educated in a special education setting, namely those in compulsory school for pupils with intellectual disabilities (CSID) in Sweden.

The study is unique for several reasons. First, involves a large number of principals who are responsible for the organisation of arts education for pupils with ID. Second, arts education for pupils with ID in Sweden is particularly interesting from an international perspective. In the national timetable for CSID, about 19% of the total planned instruction time is allocated to education in the arts. This corresponding figure in regular Swedish compulsory education is 11%¹ and the average instruction time devoted arts education in the OECD countries during 2010 was 9.5% (Winner, Goldstein, and Stéphan 2013). This indicates that arts education is regarded as particularly important for this specific group of pupils at the national organisational level. However, the availability of instruction in the arts does not guarantee quality instruction (Crockett and Blakeslee 2018), and, as emphasised by Bamford, ‘[t]here is considerable difference between what is mandated in a country and the nature and quality of the arts education programme the children in schools actually receive’ (2009, 59). Little is known about the quality of arts education for pupils with ID in Sweden. This discussion of quality must be based on actual circumstances, which is what this study aims to explore.

Prior research

As ‘the arts’ is not always clearly defined, it might in the following section refer to various artistic domains as music, drama, dance, visual, and media art.

Learning in the arts – a matter of educational leadership?

Research has demonstrated the importance of contextual issues as educational leadership and organisation for arts education. Principals have a significant impact, albeit mostly implicit, on school activities and priorities (Christophersen and Ferm Thorgersen 2015;
Bamford (2012). For example, it has been shown that a principal’s interest in and dedication to the arts is reflected in the extent to which arts education is valued at their school. The principal also plays a leading role in recruiting staff and, thus, influences the teacher competences within the school. Consequently, principals and their values should be considered when studying arts education (Christophersen and Ferm Thorgersen 2015).

Learning in the arts – a matter of teacher competence?

It does not seem unusual that generalist teachers are responsible for instruction in the arts (Bamford 2009). However, several studies have shown that these teachers often lack the competence and self-confidence to teach the arts. For example, Garvis and Pendergast (2011) found that generalist teachers had higher self-efficacy towards teaching English and mathematics than towards teaching the arts. Thus, teachers’ arts-specific knowledge affects how instruction in the arts is carried out; teaching the arts and implementing the arts syllabi requires a teacher to switch between different roles and pedagogical strategies (Hallam, Lee, and Das Gupta 2011; Lindström 2012). This has proved difficult for teachers without sufficient subject knowledge; studies on how visual art is taught in reception classes shows that preschool teachers adopt only one role, which limits the scope and effectiveness of their instruction (Hallam, Lee, and Das Gupta 2007, 2011). There is a risk that teachers without extensive subject knowledge will allow their own experience, interests and level of confidence to determine how they carry out instruction in the arts (Alter, Ays, and O’Hara 2009). This seems to apply to certain arts subjects more than others. One previous study of generalist teachers found that they were more reluctant to teach music than visual art as they perceived instruction in music to require both special language skills and specific instructional strategies (Bresler 1994).

In relation to arts education for pupils with disabilities, the question of teacher competence not only encompasses the teacher’s level of subject-specific knowledge but also their competence in special education. For example, in the United States, where pupils with disabilities usually attend regular classes, many specialist music teachers have reported feeling unprepared to teach pupils with special needs (Hammel and Hourigan 2011). Conversely, special education teachers have acknowledged the potential of arts education but consider themselves to lack knowledge of pedagogical models and methods (Kissinger and Ponder 2009).

Learning in the arts – pupils with intellectual disabilities

The aforementioned overviews of arts education and special education address the education of pupils with disabilities in general rather than specifically focusing on pupils with ID. Furthermore, reviews of curriculum research for pupils with ID, which span a period of over 40 years (1976–2016), do not explicitly include research on arts education (Moljord 2018; Shurr and Bouck 2013; Nietupski et al. 1997). However, arts education for pupils with ID has been the focus of some smaller studies (Kissinger and Ponder 2009; MacLean 2008). The results have shown that the various means of expression offered by the arts are beneficial for pupils with ID as they offer these students non-verbal ways of communicating that are meaningful and appropriate. By inspiring pupils to ask questions and make their own choices, arts education also improves their communicative skills,
independence, and self-confidence. It emphasises the creative process and places a high value on pupils’ ideas, thereby cultivating generic abilities such as flexible thinking and problem-solving. A study by Ho (2010) shows the social benefits of arts education by demonstrating how an art project enabled pupils with ID to break down social barriers and form friendships with pupils without ID. Other studies have found similar mutually beneficial connections between arts education and the process of inclusion (e.g. Ferm Almqvist and Christophersen 2017).

The arts in Swedish compulsory school for pupils with ID

Pupils and organisation of schools

The schooling of pupils with ID in Sweden is regulated by the Education Act, which stipulates that children who are not expected to meet the knowledge objectives of compulsory regular school (CRS) because of an ID should attend compulsory school for pupils with ID (CSID). Each of these two types of school has its own national curriculum, including course syllabi and timetables. Most CSIDs are located on the same campus as a CRS, with varying degrees of cooperation between the two school types. The school leadership structure is decided on a municipal level. In some municipalities, CSID and CRS have separate principals, while in others, they have the same principal.

During the academic year 2018/2019, approximately 1% (n = 11,140) of Swedish pupils between the ages of 7 and 15 were enrolled in CSID. Compulsory school for pupils with ID is divided into two orientations: one for pupils with mild to moderate ID (64.0%) and one for pupils with severe to profound ID (36.0%) (OSS (Official Statistics of Sweden) 2019b).

Arts education

In the Swedish national curricula, arts education refers to visual art, music, and craft. The timetables for CSID allocate a large share of the total planned instruction time to arts education (18.9% for pupils with mild to moderate ID and 14.9% for those with severe to profound ID). The objectives of all arts subjects are the development of subject-specific skills (methods, materials, and techniques), generic abilities (e.g. creativity, curiosity, imagination, critical thinking and communication) and personal skills (self-confidence and identity). The content and goals of visual art, music, and craft in CSID are generally similar to those in CRS but with some simplifications and adjustments relating to knowledge objectives and grades (National Agency for Education 2018).

Craft (slöjd in Swedish) has a special status among the arts subjects for two reasons. First, it has long been a mandatory school subject for all pupils in Sweden. Second, pupils in CSID with mild to moderate ID have twice as much craft instruction as pupils in CRS, which means that 52% of the time allocated to arts education is devoted to craft. Craft includes textile craft, woodwork, and metalwork. According to the curriculum, the characteristic of craft is the integration of both manual and intellectual work. The objectives of craft are making pupils aware of the relationship between part and whole as well as developing their ability to solve problems and cope with daily tasks. The craft curriculum also highlights the process of handicrafting, that is, working from an initial idea through
choices, considerations and production to the final craft product (National Agency for Education 2018).

**Teachers**

To become a certified teacher in CSID, a teacher must have a teaching degree both in a specific subject and in special education. First, arts education teachers must be certified to teach one or several arts subjects. This certification can be obtained in two ways; a) through a general teaching programme that comprises basic training in a number of school subjects including one or more arts subjects or b) through a specialist arts teacher programme that focuses on only one or two arts subjects. Even though both programmes lead to certification in teaching the arts, they differ in their levels of instruction on specific arts subjects. The former path gives teachers a somewhat superficial subject knowledge as it spans several subjects, while the latter path gives teachers a deeper and more extensive subject knowledge. Second, to be certified to teach in CSID, all teachers, including arts teachers, must have a degree in special education. In Sweden, this is an advanced special education programme of 90 credits and can only be obtained by fully trained generalist or specialist teachers with at least three years’ teaching experience. Over and above this special education certification, all other special educational supports for CSID (for example in-service training or special education resource teachers) are decided at the local school level.

In practice, a minority of CSID teachers are certified, although the numbers vary between orientations and subjects. In the mild to moderate ID orientation, an average of 13.6% of teachers are certified. In the arts, 14.3% of visual art teachers, 8.5% of music teachers and 3.8% of craft teachers are certified. In the severe to profound ID orientation, an average of 29.6% of all teachers and 19.7% of arts teachers are certified (OSS (Official Statistics of Sweden) 2019a).Teachers certified to teach the arts can be either generalist teachers with a special education competence or specialist art teachers with a special education competence. However, few specialist art teachers have a special education competence. This means that principals often have to choose between teachers with a special education competence or those with subject-specific knowledge.

**Principals**

According to the Swedish Education Act, principals must have gained pedagogical insights through both education and experience. All principals must also undertake a principal training programme, which is a specialised 30-credit university course that includes the study of school laws and regulations, management, and school leadership. The requirements are the same for all principals, regardless of the type of school, programme, grade, or group of pupils for which they are responsible.

**Aim**

The main purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of factors affecting the organisation of arts education for pupils with ID in Sweden. Four research questions are addressed:
Theoretical points of departure

Arguably, various national laws and regulations, such as the Education Act of 2010 and the national curriculum, have implications for the organisation of arts education in CSID and its practice at the local level. However, these laws and regulations allow scope for interpretation at the municipal and school levels (cf. Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012; Clark, Dyson, and Millward 1998; Kelchtermans 2007). Municipalities are independently responsible for organising CSID in relation to CRS, and principals act independently in matters of internal structure and organisation of the school(s) for which they are responsible. Principals play a key role in shaping arts education in CSID as they are responsible for selecting and recruiting teachers and modelling the norms and values that permeate the school (Heck and Hallinger 2014; Murphy and Louis 1999). Thus, we depart from the recognition of a substantial degree of autonomy at the local school level in determining how arts education for pupils with ID is structured (cf. Lundgren 1999) which, in turn, affects the content and quality of arts education at the classroom level. This is why we choose to focus on the local level and particularly on the principals responsible for CSID.

Method

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 124 CSID principals. In the spring of 2018, an electronic questionnaire was sent to all Swedish principals (N = 684) with responsibility for pupils in CSID. A total of 208 principals (30.4%) responded. Of these, 84 principals reported not having a CSID class at their school at the time and were, therefore, excluded.

The questionnaire

To achieve an overview of how arts education in CSID is organised, we designed a questionnaire based on Dillon’s (2009, 345–346) seven elements of curriculum: 1) Teacher – Who?, 2) Student – Whom?, 3) Subject – What?, 4) Milieu – Where and when?, 5) Aim – Why? To what end?, 6) Activity – How?, and 7) Result – What comes of it? Who learns what? The questionnaire was constructed by reformulating these questions into questions about teachers’ qualifications, group compositions, premises where the instruction takes place, subject matter characteristics, and the intentions, purposes, and goals of arts education in CSID.

The questionnaire consisted of ten sections. Of these, one section focused on background data and another focused on values and beliefs. All participants answered these two sections. The remaining eight sections posed questions on how arts education in
CSID is organised in relation to teachers’ education, the composition of teaching groups and the premises in which arts education takes place. These eight sections were identical except for variations related to the various arts subjects (i.e. visual art, music or craft) in combination with pupils’ age range (i.e. grades 1–6 or 7–9) and orientation (i.e. mild to moderate or severe to profound ID). Not all sections were answered by all principals; the number of sections answered depended on the scope of the principal’s responsibility, with each principal answering between three and ten sections. All questions were closed-ended and most were multiple-choice questions, though around half of the questions had additional space for the participants to develop their responses. For example, when reporting on teachers’ qualifications, the participants could specify what qualifications they included in the category ‘other education.’ A free text box was also included at the end of each section of the questionnaire.

The majority of the questions, such as those on teachers’ qualifications, were multiple-choice questions. Some questions required participants to rank statements about the purpose and value of arts education for pupils with ID in order of importance. Each of these questions required the respondents to rank four statements from 1 (most important) to 4 (least important). The four statements had to be ranked in relation to each other. Consequently, only one statement could be ranked 1, one statement ranked 2, and so forth. This paper presents the results of a selection of ten questions on background data, teachers’ education, composition of teaching groups, and the values and aims of arts education.

Procedure

Information on relevant participants was collected from a register published by the Swedish National Agency for Education, which reports on all Swedish school units, including CSID. Based on information obtained from this register, we visited the website of each school unit between December 2017 and January 2018 and collected the email addresses of the principals (N = 684). The questionnaire was developed during the winter of 2017/18. Two pilot studies were conducted; the first was completed by three educators at a principal training programme at a Swedish university and the second by three in-service principals with experience organising education for pupils with ID. The final electronic questionnaire was distributed as a link embedded in an email and was followed by four reminders.

Data analysis and presentation

Descriptive statistics are used to present the data. For the questions that involved ranking, the percentage of respondents who ranked an item as the most important (i.e. = 1) is presented. This was done to present complex data in an accessible manner.

Ethical considerations

The survey was accompanied by an information letter explaining the purpose of the study, how results would be used, the confidentiality policy, and the voluntary nature of participation. The Survey and Report software programme was used to construct and
distribute the questionnaire and collect the data. This programme automatically registered the answers and sent reminders. This ensured the highest degree of confidentiality as the identities of the respondents were unknown to the researchers, except for those principals who volunteered to participate in a forthcoming case study and shared their contact information.

Results

Before addressing the research questions, we present the results relating to the organisation of CSID at the general, non-subject-specific school level.

A majority of principals reported that their CSID classes were located on the same premises or adjacent to CRS (91.2%). About half of the principals (54.5%) were responsible for both CSID and CRS, while the rest were only responsible for CSID. Regarding principals’ responsibility for the two orientations of CSID, there was an almost equal divide between the mild to moderate orientation (n = 105) and the severe to profound orientation (n = 108). It is worth noting that these groups overlap as the total number of principals who participated in the study was 124. A majority of the principals (n = 89) were responsible for both orientations, while 16 principals were only responsible for the mild to moderate ID orientation, and 19 were only responsible for the severe to profound ID orientation.

What qualifications do teachers teaching the arts in CSID have?

Table 1 presents an overview of the variance in teachers’ qualifications reported by principals. Notably, the results show the share of principals having each qualification represented at their school. The results do not show the share of teachers with each qualification. Since most of the principals had teachers with several qualifications, the sum of percentages exceeds 100. The results show that the least common qualification was that of specialist arts teacher with a special education competence. Teachers without certification but with other educational backgrounds were slightly more common. The most commonly held qualification was that of specialist arts teacher. This qualification was held by 90.5% of teachers in the mild to moderate ID orientation and by 84.2% of those in the severe to profound ID orientation. However, the results reveal distinct

| Teacher qualifications                                      | Art subject | Mild/moderate ID orientation (n = 105) | Severe/profound ID orientation (n = 108) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Generalist teacher                                          |             | 49.5%                                  | 57.4%                                   |
| Generalist teacher with special education competence*       |             | 41.9%                                  | 67.6%                                   |
| Specialist arts teacher                                     |             | 90.5%                                  | 84.2%                                   |
| Specialist arts teacher with special education competence* | Visual art  | 41.0%                                  | 48.1%                                   |
|                                                          | Music       | 58.1%                                  | 63.0%                                   |
|                                                          | Craft       | 81.0%                                  | 72.2%                                   |
| Specialist arts teacher with special education competence* | Visual art  | 17.1%                                  | 26.8%                                   |
|                                                          | Music       | 9.5%                                   | 15.7%                                   |
|                                                          | Craft       | 6.7%                                   | 8.3%                                    |
| Other education                                             |             | 28.6%                                  | 27.8%                                   |
differences between the various arts subjects: specialist arts teachers (i.e. those with a deeper subject knowledge than generalist teachers) were most common in craft, less common in music, and least common in visual art. This pattern was similar for both orientations. However, teachers with a special education competence (both generalist teachers and specialist arts teachers) were more common in the severe to profound ID orientation.

Crosstabulation shows that principals who were only responsible for CSID reported having more generalist teachers with a special education competence (80.4%) teaching the arts compared to principals responsible for both CSID and CRS (56.7%).

What teacher qualifications do principals prioritise when organising arts education in CSID?

Three questions were posed to discover more about how principals prioritise teacher qualifications. The first question asked principals whether they prioritised special education competence or specialised arts knowledge when no fully certified teachers were available. The second and third questions asked the principals about their prioritisation of special education competence or specialised arts knowledge specifically in relation to the different arts subjects, the pupils’ ages, and their degree of ID.

The results show that around three times as many principals prioritised specialised arts knowledge (37.9%) over special education competence (12.9%). However, their priorities varied depending on the arts subject. The principals were almost united in recognising the importance of specialised arts knowledge for teaching craft (91.2%) but less so for music (75.5%) and visual arts (54%).

The principals were divided almost equally when asked about the importance of the pupils’ age and degree of ID when choosing whether to prioritise special educational competence or specialised arts knowledge, with 43.9% deeming these factors important, 41.5% deeming them unimportant and 14.6% having no opinion. Among those who thought that age and degree of ID mattered, more principals reported prioritising teachers with a specialised arts competence in the mild to moderate ID orientation than in the severe to profound ID orientation. This difference was observed in the lower grades (mild/moderate = 44.2%, severe/profound = 28.8%) and was even greater in the higher grades (mild/moderate = 65.4%, severe/profound = 26.9%). For this question, the sum of percentages exceeded 100 as more than one alternative could be chosen.

Does the organisation of the arts in CSID provide opportunities for cooperation between pupils from CSID and CRS?

The results for the question on cooperation between CSID and CRS regarding arts education show that only a minority of principals organised arts education in mixed groups consisting of pupils from both CSID and CRS (37.1% in the mild to moderate ID orientation and 26.0% in the severe to profound ID orientation). There was little difference between arts subjects in this respect, with approximately 30% of principals reporting mixed groups for each subject. As Table 2 shows, more principals report mixing groups in the mild to moderate ID orientation (n = 39) than in the severe profound orientation. The pupils’ ages only affected the occurrence of mixed groups in the severe to profound ID
orientation, where mixed groups were a little more common in grades 7 to 9 (50.0%) than in grades 1 to 6 (39.9%).

The crosstabulation shows that the occurrence of mixed groups is related to the school-level organisation of CSID. First, principals with responsibility for both CSID and CRS organised more mixed groups for arts education (44.8%) than principals responsible for only CSID (25.0%). Second, a majority (87.2%) of the principals who reporting organising mixed groups for one arts subject reported the same for the other arts subjects.

**What value do principals see in arts education for pupils in CSID?**

To further investigate the principals’ beliefs about the value of arts education, we posed two ranking questions. For each question, the principals were asked to rank four statements, in order of importance (from 1 = most important to 4 = least important). The four statements had to be ranked in relation to each other. Therefore, only one statement could be ranked 1, one ranked 2, and so forth. Table 3 shows the percentage of number 1 rankings each statement received.

As Table 3 shows, the principals had similar beliefs about the value of arts education. A majority of principals valued arts education because it offers alternative ways of expression and develops communication (62.8%) and believed that the aim of arts education is to develop creativity, imagination, problem-solving, curiosity and taking initiatives (73.7%). Only a minority believed that the value of arts education related to subject-specific skills. The third question further investigated the principals’ beliefs about the value of arts education. Principals were asked whether they regarded arts education as particularly important for pupils in CSID or equally important for all pupils, regardless of their type of school. The results show that almost three quarters (74.4%) regarded arts

**Table 2.** Percentage of principals who organised mixed groups for various grades.

| Grade         | Mixed groups mild/moderate orientation (n = 39) | Mixed groups severe/profound orientation (n = 28) |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 1–6           | 41.0%                                         | 39.3%                                         |
| 7–9           | 41.0%                                         | 50.0%                                         |
| Both 1–6 and 7–9 | 18.0%                                        | 10.7%                                         |

**Table 3.** Principals’ beliefs about the value of arts education. Percentage of number 1 rankings per statement.

| Arts education is important because it . . . | Most important |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------|
| offers alternative ways of expression and develops pupils’ communicative ability. | 62.8% |
| promotes pupils’ identity development by, among other things, increasing their confidence in their own abilities. | 20.7% |
| involves practical work, offering a pleasurable and much-needed break from more theoretical school subjects. | 8.3% |
| increases pupils’ opportunities to collaborate and facilitates mainstreaming. | 8.3% |
| Instruction in arts education should be designed so that pupils . . . | 73.7% |
| develop generic abilities such as creativity, imagination, problem-solving, curiosity and the ability to take initiatives. | 10.2% |
| learning in other school subjects is promoted by interdisciplinary collaboration. | 8.5% |
| acquire subject-specific skills in methods, materials, and techniques, enabling them to create useful products. | 7.6% |
| develop abilities such as competence in planning, evaluating and reporting through artistic working processes. |
education as equally important to all pupils, while around a quarter (24.6%) regarded it as particularly important for pupils in CSID.

Crosstabulation shows that more principals who were only responsible for CSID considered arts education to be particularly important for pupils in CSID (42.9%) than principals responsible for both CSID and CRS (10.4%). More principals who were responsible for both CSID and CRS regarded arts education as equally important for all pupils (85.1%) than principals responsible for CSID only (57.1%).

Concluding discussion

The outcomes of this study raise interesting questions regarding the organisation of arts education for pupils with ID at the school level and the prioritisation of the two areas of expertise: special education and arts education. There was almost consensus among the principals on the primary value of arts education as the opportunity to develop generic abilities, such as communication and problem-solving skills, creativity, imagination, curiosity, and initiative, rather than subject-specific skills in the use of methods, materials, and techniques. The results also show that teachers’ competence in arts education is generally prioritised over their competence in special education. This supports Eisner’s (2002) argument for the importance of high-quality arts education and his claim that teachers with extensive subject knowledge are crucial for fostering generic abilities in students.

However, our results indicate that teachers’ specialised arts knowledge is emphasised in some arts subjects (craft and music) more than others (visual art) despite the fact that there are no crucial differences between the various arts subjects or between the arts subjects in CSID and in CRS in terms of their rationales and objectives. To the best of our knowledge, this difference between the arts subjects in terms of teacher expertise has never been highlighted or discussed. Prior research has shown that specialist arts teachers find it difficult to provide instruction to pupils with disabilities (Hammel and Hourigan 2011), while special education teachers and generalist teachers, with their somewhat superficial subject knowledge, feel insecure when teaching the arts and are less likely to fully implement the syllabi (Kissingler and Ponder 2009; Hallam, Lee, and Das Gupta 2011). This indicates that more in-depth studies are needed to determine how an emphasis on one of the two areas of expertise affects the quality of the arts education pupils receive.

According to the results of this study, pupils with ID are likely to be taught arts subjects, especially craft, by specialised arts teachers without special education competence. The requirement for two areas of expertise might have implications for teacher education, which to a greater extent should include special education in teacher training programmes and training for in-service teachers, particularly in craft but also in visual art and music.

There were no salient differences between the various arts subjects in terms of cooperation between pupils in CSID and CRS. Prior research highlights the benefits of collaboration, particularly in the arts (Ferm Almqvist and Christophersen 2017; Ho 2010). Nevertheless, mixing pupils from the two school types for arts education is rare even though practical circumstances are auspicious; there are no restrictions or limitations for such collaboration and most CSIDs are located on the same premises as or adjacent to CRSs. Notably, the choice of whether to have mixed groups seems to depend on the school. The structure of certain schools and their culture seems to make collaboration
more likely. The results show that the way in which school leadership is arranged is an
influential factor as more principals responsible for both CSID and CRS reported having
mixed groups for arts education than principals solely responsible for CSID. Other studies
have also highlighted the effects of school-level organisation on inclusion (cf. Malmqvist
2016). However, further research is needed to identify other factors that might encourage
collaboration between CSID and CRS in arts education.

Finally, the outcomes of this study indicate that the prioritisation of special education,
as an area of teacher competence, is influenced by the characteristics of the pupils. Special
education competence is prioritised for younger pupils and those with a greater degree of
ID. This can be described as a deficit perspective (Ainscow 1998) or compensatory
perspective (Haug 1998) and is contrary to the concept of inclusive education. The fact
that principals responsible solely for CSIDs reported having more teachers with special
education competence teaching the arts and less collaboration between pupils with and
without ID indicate a lack of inclusivity in certain schools. Consequently, collaborative and
inclusive education seems to be dependent on how school leadership is organised.
However, further investigation of this phenomenon is required to generate reliable
results. The role of specialist arts teachers in inclusive education also requires further
study. Since specialist craft teachers are common in CSID and often work in CRS also,
targeted investments in teacher education and in-service teacher training for craft tea-
chers could make them the collaborative agents of the future.

Limitations of the study

While this study reveals useful results, certain limitations must be acknowledged. First, it is
worth noting that the results refer to the teachers’ qualifications and not the number of
teachers with each qualification; a different picture might have emerged if the focus had
been on the quantity of teachers. Second, since the questionnaire was extensive and took
time to answer, it is reasonable to believe that the principals who answered the ques-
tionnaire had a particular interest in and a positive attitude towards arts education. This
assumption is supported by the fact that 54 of the 124 principals who responded
expressed an interest in participating in a second study. Consequently, the results may
paint a somewhat brighter picture of arts education in CSID than its reality.

Third, the response rate was relatively low; the questionnaire was sent to 684
schools, but only 124 principals responded. Of the total number of principals who
received the questionnaire, 84 (12%) reported that they did not belong to the target
group since they had no CSID classes. The low response rate suggests that this
proportion may be even higher as many more of those who did not respond may
not have belonged to the target group. Another explanation for the low response rate might be the scope of the questionnaire, which contained questions connected
to the grades and orientations for which principals were responsible and, hence, was
time-consuming to complete. A simpler questionnaire might have increased the
response rate. However, this would have generated less detailed results. Although
the response rate was low, responses from 124 principals form a substantial basis for
exploring issues not previously considered.
Notes

1. *Skolförordning* [Compulsory School Ordinance], Public ordinance no. 185, Swedish Code of Statutes (2011).
2. *Skollag* [Education Act], Public law no. 800, Swedish Code of Statutes (2010).
3. Equivalent to primary and lower secondary education.
4. *Skolförordning* [Compulsory School Ordinance], Public ordinance no. 185, Swedish Code of Statutes (2011).
5. *Skolförordning* [Compulsory School Ordinance], Public ordinance no. 185, Swedish Code of Statutes (2011).
6. It should be noted that not all generalist teacher education programmes include training in teaching the arts.
7. *Skollag* [Education Act], Public law no. 800, Swedish Code of Statutes (2010).
8. The questionnaire, in Swedish, is available at https://sunet.artologik.net/kau/Preview/12864.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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