

Art as a subject in education degree programmes – Report on a study in which tertiary level students evaluate their experience of art classes as an integral part of the curriculum.

Alexander Röhler and Charlotte Heinritz

Department of Education, Alanus University of Arts and Social Sciences, Alfter, Germany

ABSTRACT. Using artistic courses as part of the curriculum in education degree programmes rests on the insight that interaction between lecturers and students is not only based on theoretical knowledge and practical skills but is also a process strongly analogous to the creation of a work of art. By using data from an interview study done two years ago on an Education Degree Programme at Alanus University, the authors examine how both students and lecturers evaluate the contribution art courses make to personality development and to preparation for pedagogical practice.

Results from the interview analysis show that the artistic elements are of crucial significance for students. For many they were a vehicle of personality development and self-discovery. Artistic work is also perceived and valued by them as significantly action-oriented, and as useful for their professional practice. Students' evaluations of artistic activities have been classified into three types and compared with those of the lecturers running the art classes in the Degree Programme. Effects and benefits of artistic activities, as perceived by students, have been identified. In conclusion, reflections from a group discussion with alumni one year after graduation on the lasting effects of art courses - especially in relation to the every-day practice of teaching - are presented.

Keywords: Art, Education Degree Programmes, Curriculum, Development of Personality, Interview Study

Context and research question

There is a broad scientific discussion around the question of whether art, used as a pedagogical tool, helps not only to equip people with the practical skills they need to be good teachers, but also to build their personalities. The role of art in relation to the abilities needed in educational work is also discussed.¹

In recent years there has been an intense, ongoing controversy around the pedagogical importance of art in child learning (see Rittelmeyer, 2010; Jäncke, 2008).

The idea that art is an essential aspect of the personal development of teachers and the organisation of educational practice underlies the tendency – especially in the context of Steiner education – to see the relation between teachers and young people in artistic terms. The relationship rests not only upon theoretical knowledge and practical skills but also upon a creative process rather like the coming into being of a work of art. For this reason art provides opportunities to practise patterns of behaviour essential to what is known as “interaction work” (Brater & Rudolf, 2006; Schmalenbach, 2011).

“This approach sees interaction work itself as an art. Through exposure to art a mode of practice is

1. A current summary of this discussion extended to all social professions is to be found in Schmalenbach (2011).

developed that trains skills and attitudes needed in practical work. Such a course of action is based on the assumption of a correspondence between the structural characteristics and ‘gestures’ of interaction work and those of artistic activities.” (Schmalenbach 2011, p. 19, translation A. Röhler)

Although no sound research results exist that either confirm or disprove the assumed positive effect of art, a lot of education degree programmes offer artistic activities in the expectation that they will contribute to better accomplishments in pedagogical practice. This is due to a long tradition of educational theory that not only points in general at analogies between artistic and pedagogical activities, but furthermore emphasises art as beneficial to the development of distinct personal characteristics necessary in educational practice. Characteristics mentioned in the literature are inner flexibility, imagination, patience, action-oriented creativity, capacity of observing, articulateness, self-awareness, goal orientation, will power; in sum, the ability to apprehend through empathy and reflection the specifics of every child and to nurture the individuality of each one. In other words: teachers need pedagogical tools for “subjectifying action”, and these they can acquire through engaging in art (Brater & Rudolf 2006).

And in day-to-day practice they need to be able to engage in open situations with unsure outcome – situations which are affected by the creativity and “turn of mind” of at least one other person. Thus art, by supplying an “artistic process”, can, according to some authors, contribute to mastering insecurity and developing openness in educational interactions and to helping find creative solutions:

“Every artistic activity or exercise leads into an artistic process, in which the solution cannot be determined on a rational, logical level, or with reference to clearly defined rules, but involves an element of play, experimentation and risk. The potential of an object or an issue can be discovered through the interplay of observation and action. This process includes phases of insecurity and crisis, and needs to be open for what is new and unexpected. ... The result of working intensively with the object or issue opens new insights and possibilities.” (Brater & Wagner, 2011, p. 124)

Schmalenbach has shown why the highly subtle and complex nature of teaching situations, combined with their inescapable indeterminacy poses a great challenge to study programmes for social and educational occupations. People who work in social and caring – and, by the same token, educational – professions:

“... have to have the requisite breadth of awareness to be able to enter into the situation and the feelings of other people, and generally to have a deep appreciation of the suffering they may be going through; at the same time, given these high demands on their personalities, they need access to the perception of their own emotions. All this makes for situations that are complex and ambiguous, and sometimes affected by high tensions. Quick-wittedness and a facility for improvisation are needed, as well as the ability to realise what will help in any particular situation and to carry it out too. To be possessed of this degree of awareness or, to put it more modestly, even to be able to interpret such situations, constitutes a creative process, and this applies even more strongly to actions. Thus, besides its technical and scientific elements, this work also has – at least potentially – the character of an artistic process.” (Schmalenbach, 2011, p. 13, translation A. Röhler)

To sum up what has been said so far, artistic actions can be applied to educational contexts because there exist far-reaching correspondences between pedagogical and artistic patterns of behaviour.

Based on this assumed usefulness of artistic activities in connection with the personalities of teachers and their pedagogical actions – an assumption that is reflected in the curricula of education degree programmes – the following questions can be posed in the context of teacher education in general:

What significance has art for students training to be teachers and for their subsequent professional life?

Are the artistic activities experienced as important and useful for their professional educational practice?

Do the effects of artistic activities on the personalities of trainee teachers persist into their professional lives?

Are these effects considered to be beneficial for the student’s professional practice?

The research discussed here tries to answer these questions by using data from an interview study done two years ago as part of a Masters Degree Programme in Education at Alanus University. In the Studium Generale part of the programme, art is an integral element of the curriculum every student has to undergo.

The main research focus was on the question of how students evaluate the importance of artistic activities

they took part in for the development of their personalities and in relation to their professional practice.

Data

The programme started in 2007, and during a first phase of data collection guided interviews were conducted in 2010 with the students of this first year. All 15 of this group of students were asked about their experiences in their studies at Alanus University. The interviews were carried out by Petra Ehrler, herself a student of this year², and directed and supervised by Charlotte Heinritz who is responsible for teaching empirical methods in the “Educational Research” course. After transcribing the recorded interviews a first analysis was undertaken by Alexander Röhler, a senior researcher who was not involved in teaching the students of this year and did not know them personally either. Interpretation of the interview passages that deal with “art” was done by both researchers together.³

The interviews with the students were mainly conducted in Spring and early Summer 2010, shortly before the end of their three-year-study.

In order to back up and enhance the findings drawn from these interviews, a group discussion with four individuals who represented typical points of view of this cohort of students was carried out one year later, in June 2011. Before this discussion took place the results of the analysis on the topic “art in the degree course”, related to the art classes it entailed, were presented to these students. The purpose of this discussion, moderated by Charlotte Heinritz, was to look back on the students’ experience of the course of study, focusing particularly on certain aspects. Above all, the focus was on whether any of the contents of the explicitly artistic courses, and if so, which ones, were felt to be of particular relevance to the jobs the participants were now doing.

In a third phase of data collection the professors mainly involved in teaching the 2007 year were interviewed by Charlotte Heinritz and Alexander Röhler. The objective was to generate a better understanding of the role of art in the study programme, by contrasting the experiences and evaluations of students with the points of view of professors. For this article two interviews with professors of painting and eurhythmy were analysed.

In analysing the data the authors partly followed the Grounded Theory Method. Major parts of the material, however, were processed by Content Analysis to obtain a quick overview of the issues and contents. In using Content Analysis, while the authors drew upon the classical method of Mayring (2007, 2000) and newer developments stemming from Gläser and Laudl (2009), they nevertheless worked very freely with this method.

The whole project was designed according to the Grounded Theory Method (Glaser und Strauss, 1967; Strauss und Corbin, 1998). This method stipulates a rule-guided approach, yet above all is strictly concentrated upon the object of research, whereby data collection and analysis are interfolded: from the analysis of the first data the next steps of data collection are developed; the analysis of which leads to the planning of the next data collection and so forth. Analysis follows the code paradigm which is provided by Grounded Theory Method: for every phenomenon under consideration the relevant conditions - the interaction between protagonists, strategies, tactics and consequences - are investigated.

Analysis was assisted by using the software atlas.ti based on Grounded Theory Method.

For further understanding, background information on the Masters Degree Programme in Education at Alanus University with integrated “Studium Generale” is presented here:

1. The extra-occupational Masters Degree Programme in Education consists of two core areas: “School and Teaching” and “Educational Research”. The core area “School and Teaching” aims at persons with degrees in particular subjects who want to become teachers – in state sponsored or in Waldorf schools. Some of these students were already employed as teachers during their studies. The core area “Educational

2. Petra Ehrler was interviewed by another student of the same cohort.

3. At some stages a third researcher, Petra Böhle, took part in the analysis.

research” is directed at educators in general, and especially at teachers. With their studies they acquire skills in empirical methods of social research, which they can test already during their studies by small research projects in their own educational field of work and finish up with an empirical masters degree study.

Integrated in both study areas is “Studium Generale und Kunst (Art)” which offers seminars in philosophy, aesthetics and art. “Studium Generale und Kunst (Art)” is an integral part of all degree programmes at Alanus University.

2. Artistic seminars belonging to “Studium Generale und Kunst (Art)” encompass four fields:

- Painting and drawing,
- Sculpture and form modelling,
- Eurythmy,
- Speech formation and drama.

These artistic courses are focused on practical action in the several fields of art. The Handbook for the Degree Programme defines the following study goals: *“that in the main classes the students should become capable of exercising their own creative autonomy; and that they should engage individually in exploring certain aspects in more depth”* (Alanus University, 2011, p. 16, translation A. Röhler). The artistic results are presented and reflected upon in examinations at the end of each study module. The artistic courses do not aim explicitly at educating (professional) artists. Rather the goals of teaching are: *“to reflect on the experience of artistic developmental processes”* and *“to embrace artistic processes as a particularly action-oriented approach to learning”* (Alanus University, 2011, pp. 13, 15, 17, translation A. Röhler).

Empirical Findings

In being asked about important and meaningful experiences that stood out in their studies as a whole, many students began their answers with narratives about the seminars in the field of art. The following two quotations may be used to illustrate this:

“Well, my experience of art, the chance to really go into painting, to discover this as a new language for oneself, a new possibility of expression; and this is a powerful experience which I associate with Alfter.” (Interview 7)

“The interesting artistic options on offer are what come to mind first of all, because I did not at all expect this, that being an education research student I would have anything to do with art. I had assumed that it must be pretty dry as a subject, perhaps even a little boring, a bit too statistical, so I had serious misgivings about the whole thing and thought, well, one has to go through this - and then this totally amazing art course presented itself and I was actually very, very surprised and very happy, and re-discovered an old passion, namely painting and drawing.” (Interview 15)

The frequent enthusiastic references to artistic seminars show that these elements in their studies have a strong meaning for students. However, this is not very surprising, as Alanus University is centred upon art and many of the students in the Masters Programme are already involved in art education in one way or another, which leads to the assumption that students enrolling in this programme expect artistic courses and already bring with them artistic knowledge and interest.

Meaning of Art in Education Degree Programmes

From the interviews it was clear that students’ evaluation of the significance of artistic courses for their personal development fell into three main types.

Type I – students becoming enthusiastic about art courses

The students of this type are graduates who are going through the programme in order to acquire a teaching

qualification. Although they have not come primarily on account of the artistic component of the course, they soon come to experience the artistic activities as a source of personal development, self-discovery and creative teaching ideas. In consequence, the artistic work is highly valued by the students as a special training in the ability to act on one's own initiative, which they also perceive as useful for their work as teachers.

Interesting is the fact that these students have an initial reluctance in relation to art, as they did not expect to have to do such courses as part of their studies.

„... well, I would not have done something like painting or form modelling by choice. But there it was, on the syllabus, so I had to do it ...” (Interview 1)

“I actually had no choice. Here painting is compulsory.” (Interview 7)

Despite this early reserve, the students' opinion of artistic activities gradually changes. The experience of artistic working brings about a more positive attitude to it. The students discover new aspects of their own personalities during a free and open process. They encounter crises when solving artistic tasks, they expand inner boundaries and experience the creativity of artistic production. This all leads to the conviction that artistic work contributes to the enrichment of one's own personality. According to the utterances of these Type I students, artistic work also develop pedagogical skills. This results in a greater capacity of action in their field of practice.

“And it was brought home to me once again, that this artistic process is basically something highly creative, something that I need in teaching too. ... And to dive into this again and in doing so to follow this process myself and explore different areas, this I find to be *the* greatest asset of these studies. ... Thus art, as I see it, is a field where I experience limits and go beyond boundaries. ... it was kind of a point of crisis to realize this: the brush, the chalk, they don't do what I want them to do, so we battle each other and, damn it ... at this point it occurred to me that this had something to do with my personality, and I realize, too, that this was a new way of getting to know myself.” (Interview 1)

In coming to terms with the art courses on offer, the experiences of these Type I students are entirely in keeping with the goals laid down in the curriculum of the education degree programme: through art they expand their personal skills and develop powers of practical initiative directly applicable to the practice of teaching.

Type II – students remaining critical towards art courses

The experience of the Type II students is different. Like those of Type I, they also were not expecting artistic courses to be on the syllabus and were equally reluctant and doubtful at the beginning. However, in contrast to Type I, they did not change their attitude in the course of their artistic work. They felt that the artistic seminars were personally valuable, but failed to see how they fitted into a masters degree in education. They were doubtful about the effects of art upon personality development and could not connect these effects in any meaningful way with educational practice.

These students consider art a mere private activity, which can be a pleasant pastime but is not of use for a higher qualification in professional teaching skills. From their point of view effects on personality are uncertain – and even if there were any they had no relevance for educational practice. Artistic courses should therefore, if at all, only be offered as electives.

„Well, speech formation yes, but the rest, I really do not have to have it and I would find it fine if, for example, one would say that during the studies one has to do something in art, but one is free in which area one will do it.” (Interview 6)

For this Type the degree programme does not have the intended effects.

Further analysis will have to look into the reason for the finding that some students achieve the goals of the curriculum in respect of the meaning of art in education studies, while others do not.

Type III – students with a previous artistic training - enthusiastic from the beginning

Within the third type we find students who were eager to engage with art from the beginning. They have a high interest in art and some of them have been active as artists in the past or even work as artists at present. Artists, art teachers and artistically trained educators belong to this third type. By means of artistic work during their studies they discovered unknown areas within it, or they rediscovered and reactivated areas they were already familiar with. Thus some of the students were inspired to do painting or portrait drawing after a long interval. The possibility of engaging in art (again) was experienced by them as a great enrichment. They became deeply involved in inner processes triggered by their own artistic work. Some of them came to feel that they only began to realise their artistic ambitions or even became artists only through their studies. In students of this type the discovery or consolidation of an artistic identity as an effect of the study courses is in the foreground.

This raises questions about the curriculum of the Masters Programme insofar as training artists is not one of its aims. However, as the analysis shows, some of the students of the third type misconstrue the artistic seminars in just this way. They consider these seminars as designed to advance their artistic abilities and identities, while not realising that such courses are actually supposed to have a direct relationship to educational practice.

Effects of Art in Education Degree Programmes

Having distinguished and described these three different types of attitude the students have towards the meaning and relevance of the artistic curriculum in the education degree course at Alanus University, we now come to a second aspect: students' assessment of the effects of artistic work.

The effects of artistic seminars reported by the students can be distinguished into several categories or areas.

The first category encompasses *intrinsic effects* of art. Students related in the interviews that through the art courses they were encouraged to do artistic work on their own, because they experienced these activities as enriching and joyful. This could be painting, or making art objects from wood or metal, writing poems or even looking at pictures in an art museum.

“To me the experiences with art are always so rich and so much associated with joy, that perhaps I could now say there was something special about every work I have done.” (Interview 2)

“I now go more often to the museum, where I tend to look at pictures from a distance and then go nearer and nearer to see how the artist accomplished the work. I approach the whole thing much more carefully, not so in a rush. I have learned to take my time.” (Interview 11)

The second area consists of *effects on the study situation*. Students claimed that artistic activities helped establish group cohesion. This is because, on the one hand, many exercises were done as a group (eurythmy, speech formation, final examination performance), while on the other, artistic work itself is claimed to motivate people to connect.

“Well, I realize, I found the experience of the body created by Eurythmy extremely important too. Just coming finally to yourself, but being part of the group also. Thus, there was this interplay, and I am still very much convinced that this also made a significant contribution to binding our group together - right from the first week ...” (Interview 1)

“The first thing that comes to my mind is that we exercised as a group. When we improvised theatre-play, when someone from the audience made a suggestion... and two others had to act this out and then someone else could just chip in and you just improvise and make up a story from this - spontaneous things - I found it as an exercise quite, quite fascinating for the purpose of becoming a teacher, just to react spontaneously and to act, also on stage, in pairs or also by oneself. Well. These were actually the finest experiences - the ones together in the group.” (Interview 4)

Another aspect in this second category was the effect of art upon more scientific aspects of the course. Art

was seen as an opportunity to rest from intellectual activities and as a useful means to understanding scientific contents on another level. Art and research were seen as linked insofar as they are both comprehensive ways of observing things. Beyond this, art can contribute to the process of reflecting on one's own biographical situation, which becomes apparent for some students when working on a self-portrait.

“Then a further major experience was definitely the task of doing a self-portrait That I find very important, too - this biographical situation in which one has the opportunity to take a piece of work through several stages ... and where one confronts oneself repeatedly in this peculiar situation just through self-perception.” (Interview 9)

The third area where effects of art were perceived by the students is *one's own personality*. Students claimed that they “[went] differently through the world” (Interview 1), that they perceived differently and more exactly, that they could observe in a better way and more patiently. They told about crisis situations and experiencing limitations, and how they coped with these situations and experienced inner change and development (compare Type I).

“I think I observe better. After Sweden [a seminar excursion week in Sweden with different courses, a component of which was landscape painting] I talked so often about the woods. What an extraordinary green, I could not look at any other green any more ... The fact was that my eye had been trained, or my capacity for patience or both.” (Interview 11)

The fourth area where students see effects of art is *pedagogical work* itself. One important was self-experience judged to be meaningful for professional practice. Creativity is seen as useful for educational practice. The experiences in the artistic seminars were compared to those of pupils in classroom situations: to have to engage in a process whose course and end is not entirely clear or to experience how it feels to receive a bad mark or to be treated unfairly.

“To realize I myself have to get into a process where I, so to speak, already have a certain amount of know-how ... but I have to leave that solid ground behind me. Indeed, that is something I also very often demand from the pupils I deal with too.” (Interview 1)

“It became plain to me that in art there in fact cannot be any objectivity... I found myself able to identify with the pupil who doesn't get the good mark and with it the teacher's recognition, whose commitment is not valued...” (Interview 8)

Another important point here is that some things can be incorporated directly into the practice of teaching. This is especially true for exercises in speech formation, but also in eurythmy. Furthermore, drama and music were mentioned. One of the students applied the artistic method of observing to the class and, thus, was better able to empathize with her pupils.

Objectives of art courses in the study programme according to the professors

Two professors from the field of artistic study were interviewed in order to clarify the following questions:

What aims and intentions did they have in giving their artistic seminars, what methods did they apply, and were their intentions taken up by the students?

The professor of painting spoke about two of the course contents: portrait and landscape painting. Both contents received – mostly enthusiastic – mention by the students. The aim of portrait painting, which was the first of the courses was to initiate an artistic investigation of one's own self through a series of very detailed steps; especially the tension between inner emotional experience and outward appearance was to be explored. This process was designed to merge with the work on one's own personality.

“So how do you approach a picture? How do you arrange it? How do you put yourself proportionally, for example, into a format? Some make themselves entirely small, some make themselves gigantic. And it has to do with you. You do it because you also are it. And it often also fits and you can raise this all as an issue, of course. You have to do this very sensitively, but this develops into work on your own personality. You notice that you can really work on yourself through such an artistic medium.” (Professor of painting's interview)

About the students of the 2007 year the professor said there were many gifted artists, who worked in a

very individualistic and style-oriented way. This evaluation corresponds with the student interviews assigned to type III: students that brought artistic training with them and were inspired by the courses on offer to intensify their artistic work, to resume it or to develop or discover new aspects of it.

The further objectives of this professor consisted in leading the students into intensifying their perception and having them learn to adopt a different perspective.

She sees the gain for their personalities in the acquisition of new habits, such as the intensification of perception. The new options this provides can be retained and the work on one's own personality taken up and pursued each time:

“And with this it is, well, I could not give you figures or a time-frame. I think the options you accumulate depend upon the degree to which your perception can be intensified. And more than this, I believe, is not possible. You know how you can arrive at the option of intensifying your perception, and intensifying your experience by working artistically.” (Professor of painting's interview)

“Well, I believe as a professor I cannot give them more than this to take with them. I can give experiences that lead to initial, let's say marginal, skills that simply multiply according to how well you are able to work on them or work further on it yourself.” (Professor of painting's interview)

The professor of eurythmy verbalized her objectives this way: An important and urgent topic for teachers is to understand their relationship to themselves and to the world as a continuing design process. Because of its heavily process-oriented nature, eurythmy is a very good means of exercising this continuing design process of self-relationship and world-relationship:

“This is what you can exercise in Eurythmy wonderfully; everything always is a process and has to be newly created again and again. And there is nothing that is ever finished. That will not happen in Eurythmy ... you always have to do it anew. You can never look at it and say: finished.” (Professor of eurythmy's interview)

To engage in the process-based nature of the social world and to be able to actively organise it is very important in dealing with children in a way that supports their developmental processes.

A second objective and potentiality of eurythmy lies in the fact that it enables the exercising of concurrent action and thereby the perceiving of oneself in relation to others. To master this is very important and helpful even in every-day educational practice, because a teacher concurrently has to act and perceive himself or herself and his or her pupils in order to organise a class in accordance with his or her pedagogical objectives.

“The most important things I want to exercise with the students are in fact those issues: to learn to understand my relationship to myself, my relationship to the world as something I constantly organise. I am involved in a design process. I am constantly putting myself in a relation to the world. And over and over again I have to do this constantly and rather intentionally indeed as a teacher. Otherwise things happen to me, or else my own class happens to me. And this is a problem; in order to remain competent to act I have to know that I am the one who organises my relationship to the world and this is one of the main things. And then always remain aware of the processes. Never to the outcomes, not to what has become. But to look always: Where is the process going? How is the process? Children develop. All people develop, but children and young people exceptionally, and I find this one of the most important skills of all for teachers: Always to look: What wants to emerge there? Not: what is today?” (Professor of eurythmy's interview)

Persistence of the effects of artistic courses – a group discussion with alumni one year after graduation

One year after finishing their studies at Alanus University, four alumni were interviewed in a group discussion led by Charlotte Heinritz. Together the participants of the discussion looked back on their study experiences aiming to explore - from their point of view - what meaning the artistic courses had for their current professional life.

On the issue of transferring artistic skills and presentations to the class room situation in, one former student said that she felt herself to be more confident in her every-day practice at school:

“I can remember finding it astonishing that I had to present my artistic things... it was always very nerve-racking, because the things I presented had so much to do with me and I also had to reveal quite a lot about myself, much more than if I gave a presentation on any other topic. And now I realize that ... the ... professors ... handled this very well because ... I make myself incredibly vulnerable if I just also open myself during this artistic process, and even now I notice, in hindsight, how this strengthened me. When I am now in class there are often moments when I only have my feelings to guide me, and I now have the confidence that I can trust more in this. Yes, I have become more confident on the emotional level. ... And because you have to react in class very spontaneously sometimes, and things happen sometimes where instinct is faster than the mind, you may actually find in the moment just what they need. And I have the feeling, now in hindsight, but what I was not so aware of during my studies, I have the feeling I stand in class as a somewhat changed person, and can integrate such spontaneous actions better emotionally.” (Group discussion, participant 1)

One issue of discussion was the question of whether the meaning of the artistic exercises should be made more explicit during the seminars. For those who did not have very positive experiences with art it may be helpful perhaps to explain the potential meaning of artistic exercises for educational practice:

“Well, I believe that at some points we could have gone into more depth. Thus, when I draw things I learn to observe the details. And how hard we tried when drawing something in Sweden to look closely and put it down on paper. And my question is: does this not help in class to actually observe better and could one not highlight it even more as a central theme – I mean the fact that there are clear connections between artistic processes and to pedagogical action, and we could thus be trained to transfer them. This would become clearer to those people who just say: ‘Oh, art is nothing for me.’ who have also such a negative mode maybe inside. Perhaps in this way it could become clearer to them on the intellectual level how crucial it is to observe such things intimately.” (Group discussion, participant 2)

In contrast to this another student appreciated that the artistic experiences were not talked about:

„I found it in a sense quite nice that this was not done. Because then it again gets such a cognitive flavour and this I found quite nice ... this activity on your own ... personality without reflecting it once again in your mind. I found this quite nice, to speak frankly.” (Group discussion, participant 3)

Conclusion

As a result of the interview study presented here it can be concluded that the artistic elements in the Master of Arts Degree Programme in Education at Alanus University are accepted by most students. They evaluated the artistic courses as an enriching and encouraging experience and partly as an opportunity to have experiences that affect their own educational practice. This enthusiasm can develop from an initially reluctant attitude (3 interviews, Type I) as well as from a willing participation in the seminars (9 interviews, Type III). However, reluctant participation can also persist over time and lead even to complete rejection of art in pedagogical studies (3 interviews, Type II).

Not only Type II – where the artistic curriculum’s intention fails from students’ points of view – raises the question as to the conditions under which the goals of artistic elements in teacher education, as they are stated in the curriculum and were verbalised by the art professors interviewed, can be successful. This question is also raised from another perspective with respect to Type III, where some students (re)discover their artistic identities and thereby misunderstand the intentions of the artistic curricula as part of teacher education. Both types present challenges to the further development of the curriculum of artistic courses in education degree programmes.

The analysis of the utterances of the students interviewed reveals that some of the personal characteristics claimed to emerge from artistic activities are indeed developed by the artistic courses on the curriculum. Besides practical skills, characteristics mentioned with regard to educational practice are the capacity for the observation of self and others, as well as an emotionally founded, action-oriented creativity.

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