**Journal:** *Disability & Society*

**Title:** ‘Children see before they speak’: An exploration of ableism in art education

**Author:** Claire Penketh, Liverpool Hope University

**Introduction: Art Education and Disability Studies**

The visual and tactile arts have long been recognised for their educative value and have an established place in learning in compulsory education in the UK and beyond (Lowenfeld, 1957; Read, 1967; Eisner, 1972). Art education aims to promote the development of practical skills and capabilities as well as a contextual and historical understanding of art, crafts and design work. Although early work by Viktor Lowenfeld emphasised a therapeutic application of the arts for disabled children and young people he was clear in the universal relevance of art education in creating ‘a better world’ (Michael, 1982:2). Art educators are uniquely placed to shift pedagogy from an emphasis on therapy and remediation to an arts education that can actively contribute to furthering the civil rights of disabled people (Blandy, 1991;1994). This acknowledgement of the creative and generative benefits of arts practice suggests that art education has the potential to shift the boundaries of limited realisations of inclusive education to pedagogies that recognise and work with diversity in generative and creative ways (Kuppers, 2014). There are compelling arguments for developing the relationship between disability studies and art education since both can recognise the creative potential of diverse minds and bodies (Derby, 2012). Art education in the UK and beyond is acknowledged as a potential site for critical social practice emphasising the relationship between powerful pedagogies and social and political change (Atkinson & Dash, 2005). However, art education has also been criticised for its adherence to outmoded and archaic practices which can result in the exclusion of those for whom art education is inaccessible or alienating (Hughes, 1998; Dash, 2010; Penketh, 2011). Importantly, and in addition to these specific explorations regarding pedagogic practice, art education in England and Wales is subject to the limiting discourse of so-called special education. Any readings of the intersection between disability and art education in the UK must therefore take account of the dominance of this discourse and the subsequent othering that can take place when we make a distinction between education and the education of children with so-called special educational needs. I use the phrase ‘so-called’ to problematize the designation of learners needs as beyond or outside or additional to usual educational provision although the term special educational needs is used now throughout the paper.

This paper brings theoretical perspectives from crip theory (McRuer, 2006) to a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of subject reports evaluating the quality of art, craft and design education in England and Wales (Ofsted, 2009; Ofsted, 2012). The aim is to apply McRuer’s committed anti-ableist approach to constructions of ability in reports on pedagogic practice in art, craft and design (McRuer,2006). The development and application of a Critical crip Discourse Analysis (CcDA) allows for an examination of ableism and disablism via an exploration of language and images used to represent good practice in art education and enables a discussion of apparent differences in the value attributed to art education for disabled children and young people and their non-disabled peers. I argue that such analysis is essential in informing and promoting an anti-ableist pedagogy that is of benefit to art education.

Critical-crip Discourse Analysis (CcDA) provides a framework for the systematic exploration of the ways in which the relationship between art education and disability is constituted through language and images including the ways art education produces and reproduces disability. This paper brings theoretical perspectives from disability studies to examine ‘taken for granted assumptions’ about art education that can be described as ableist. This involves examining the ways in which educational practices can reinforce so-called able-bodied/able-mindedness. Such perspectives can enable us to re-imagine an equitable and sustainable future for art, craft and design education by testing the ways in which art education is limited by ableist practices.  It is worth noting from the outset that although the preferred, and arguably more inclusive, name for the subject in the UK has been art, craft and design education, I will follow Atkinson in his use of the abbreviated term, art education, throughout the paper (Atkinson, 2011). A fuller explanation of CDA and the intersection with crip theory is provided later in the methodology section of this paper.

Current practices in art education in England and Wales are governed by educational policies that define some disabled children and young people as having special educational needs (DfE, 2014). The dominant discourse of special education has long been problematized for its reductive qualities by many concerned with equity in education as well as for the disabling nature of this discourse (Ball, 2013; Moore and Slee: 2012; Barton, 1986; Barton and Tomlinson, 1984). Although separate from curricular guidance on art education, legislation for special education has a significant influence on the ways in which art education and disability are conceptualised in policy and practice (Penketh, 2015). More recent education policy has also been informed by policies advocating the inclusion of all learners. Some readings of inclusion have been expansive to engage with perceived gender bias in subjects, ethnic diversity and linguistic variation (for example) although for some inclusion has become short hand for special education (Moore & Slee, 2012). Inclusion, in this paper, is recognised as a set of processes that have become implicated in the identification and separation of learners without fully addressing the exclusive nature of many aspects of schooling. Policy initiatives seeking to promote the inclusion of all children and young people have permeated discourses in art education at all levels and age ranges (see Hatton, 2015 for example) and inclusion in art education is a central theme that connects both reports discussed here. This analysis of ableist discourses in art education acknowledges the continued influence of discourses relating to special educational needs through the language of inclusion and these are explored later in the paper.

**Applying crip theory to art education**

Crip theory employs the problematic word ‘crip’ in order to disrupt the dominance of ableism. This is a conscious use of a term employed by Robert McRuer (2006) in order to identify and subvert a range of cultural practices that prioritize and prefer so called able bodied/able mindedness. Of significance here is McRuer’s recognition of the centrality of compulsory-ablebodiedness to a range of social and cultural practices and in this case to art education. Johnson and McRuer (2014) propose that a critical analysis of definitions of able-bodied/disabled has replaced heteronormativity as the central concern for the 21st century and argue that ‘an understanding of virtually any aspect of contemporary Western culture must be not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance’ (p.131) if it fails to do so incorporate such work. This creates a compelling argument for the application of crip theory to practices in art education since an acknowledgement of ableism requires us to question taken for granted practices in art education. Rather than maintaining a focus on disability we need then to become aware of the ways in which art education creates and reinforces particular forms of ability (the preferred minds and bodies that can ‘do’ art education most successfully). Here I am drawing on work by Lennard Davis who advises us to work harder to identify the construction of norms in order ‘to help ‘normal’ people see the quotation marks around their assumed state’ (Davis, 1995:ix). Davis urges us to turn our attention to the ‘construction of normalcy’ in order to better understand the problematic creation of the ‘norm’ in the same way that ‘recent scholarship on race’ has focused on ‘whiteness’ acknowledging the role of normalcy in creating ‘the problem of the disabled person’ (Davis, 1995: 24).

The identification of ability in art education is an essential step in analysing ableism since descriptions of ability can help us to recognise the processes that determine which bodies/minds are relevant to debates about the quality of art education. How we create and treat ability in art education is as important then as recognising how we produce and reproduce disability. The universal relevance of this approach is asserted by Wendell (1989:121) who advises that a theory of disability is liberating for disabled and non-disabled people ‘since the theory of disability is also the theory of oppression of the body by society and its culture’. Examining the creation of so-called able-bodied/able-mindedness is important in the pursuit of democratic principles for education, which may serve to liberate and enhance pedagogic practice.

Art education as part of the ‘ableist landscape’ of educational practice determines the extent to which the lives and experiences of disabled children and young people are valued. Campbell’s description of ableism as ‘a map of simulated territory that denotes the homelands of humanness, the dispensable beasts and changelings existing on the perimeter’ prompts us to recognise the exclusionary nature of the ways in which ability is defined (Campbell, 2009:196). Reports regarding the quality of practice about art education constitute a further means by which ‘cultural memories’ about who and what is valued in art education are transmitted (Campbell, 2009: 196) and educational practices relying on the performance of particular types of minds and bodies are confirmed, reified and therefore replicated in future practice. Campbell’s topographical metaphors resonate with more recent work by McRuer and Johnson who place epistemology at the heart of their project developing ‘cripistemology’ as a means of understanding the world from a ‘crip, anti-ableist, anti-normative position’ (McRuer and Johnson 2014:132). This signals a shift from recognising ableist practices to actively acknowledging of the benefits of anti-ableist approaches which recognise that anti-normative experience can destabilise, shift and deepen our understanding the world.

Mitchell, Snyder and Ware (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015) apply these ideas directly to the ‘socially anemic goals of inclusion’ (p.81) where impairment effects are minimised as ‘peripheral embodiments’ and differences assimilated in order to educate those that can be normalised with minimum disturbance to educational practices. This negation of experience is recognised elsewhere as a form of ‘epistemic invalidation’ where what is known through and with the disabled body/mind is devalued by the imposition of professional knowledge (Wendell, 1989). Mitchell et al develop curricular cripistemologies as a response to such forms of inclusionism, establishing pedagogic contexts that promote productive interactions *with* embodied differences rather than attempting to mask them or filter them out. Curricular cripistemologies therefore recognise disability as central to curricula rather than a matter only for special interventions. The significance of curricular cripistemology for this project lies in its potential to shift pedagogic practice in art education in non-trivial ways, leading to a transformation that necessitates a re-evaluation of the crip/queer lives that have so far been devalued (Mitchell et al 2015: 81). Although this paper has a specific emphasis on art education it is therefore important to recognise its broader relevance since this methodological approach could be extended to other subjects across the curriculum.

**Why crip art education?**

Cripping art education enables us to critique the way we make sense of the world from an anti-ableist, anti-normative position but some might question this theoretical imposition on art education particularly at a time when its role in the curriculum is threatened by the imposition of the English Baccalaureate (Adams, 2014; NSEAD, 2016). McRuer reminds us that crip theory resists easy resolutions and aims to ‘continuously invoke, in order to further the crises, the inadequate resolutions that…compulsory able-bodiedness offers us’ (McRuer, p.133). The idea of resisting a resolution and invoking further crises may cause concern for art educators whose subject is under threat. However, I am applying an anti-ableist reading to discourses in art education in order to sustain and invigorate the subject. Art education should not be cosseted, protected or excluded from this exposure to theory. I argue that this is a means by which art education can be sustained via its capacity to work creatively with such theoretical explorations. As Johnson and McRuer indicate art education, as an aspect of contemporary Western culture, is damaged if it resists an analysis of the *able-bodied/disabled* discourses currently defining its practices. It is therefore important to expose art education to such interrogations for two reasons. First, the central argument in this paper relates to the promotion of diverse approaches to art education, recognising that at its most effective it is accessible and relevant to a full constituency of learners. The identification of exclusionary discourses in art and design education can enable us to improve practice. Second, it is important to expose any field to interrogation through new and emerging theoretical frameworks. In doing so the subject is sustained as vibrant and relevant to changing academic, social and cultural contexts. By recognising the value of ‘complex embodiments’ art educators can recognise ‘the disabled body’ as ‘a critical resource for thinking about what a human being is’ (Siebers, 2015: 239) and this can have real value for the subject. Our obligation to uphold cultural and artistic education as a human right for all children and young people therefore has the capacity to shape the field of art education enabling it to develop in novel and/or unanticipated directions (UNESCO, 2006).

The next section of the paper outlines the methodology used to examine disability and art education as a means of addressing the following questions:

* How is normalcy constructed in reports about the quality of art education?
* To what extent is ableism evident in reports on best practice in art education?
* What types of mind/bodies are purged in these evaluative reports on the quality of art education?
* Is it possible to re-imagine an anti-ableist art education?

**Outlining a Methodology for Critical crip Discourse Analysis**

As a one-time art educator now working in the field of disability studies at a UK university I do not identify as disabled. I am an educationalist with a specific interest in arts based learning and committed to promoting art education for *all* children and young people. Disability studies offer important theoretical tools with which to examine inclusive and exclusive practices in art education as well as establishing a means for developing pedagogic practice. My research interest therefore starts from a theoretical exploration but aims to offer opportunities for the development of practice. This section will therefore outline the methodological approach taken and the appeal of Critical crip Discourse Analysis for researching current discourses about practice as a precursor for change.

Following earlier work by Margaret Price (2009), this study combined Critical Discourse Analysis with theoretical perspectives from disability studies and more specifically crip theory (McRuer, 2006; McRuer & Johnson, 2014).Critical Discourse Analysis recognises language as social practice that represents, produces and reproduces meaning, bringing critical theory and linguistic analysis together in order to examine the oppressive as well as liberatory dimensions of power (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & O’Garro, 2005:366-9). Analysts express a commitment to addressing social problems via a systematic investigation of the relationship between small units of written or spoken language in use or ‘texts’ and social and cultural practices that define and represent what we believe and value. Gee makes a useful distinction between these as (little ‘d’) discourse or ‘language bits’ that can be read through ‘cultural models’ of (big ‘D’) Discourse (Gee 2011:36; Rogers et al 2005: 370). Critical Discourse Analysis treats discourse as ‘more than a synonym for language’ (Barad, 2003:819) recognising its role in the representation as well as shaping of meaning. Barad reminds us that discourse ‘is not what is said ; it is that which constrains and enables what can be said’ and that ‘discursive practices define what counts as meaningful’ (Barad, 2003: 819).

Kress advises that an expansive definition of ‘texts’ can be considered in discourse analysis shifting from written and spoken language to other ‘semiotic entities’ such as static and moving images (Kress, 2011: 207). An exploration of these different modes can enable us to recognise a sense of ‘cohesion’ in the ways in which meanings are culturally produced and understood through image and text. This can further our understanding of the contribution of language forms to social and cultural practices that appear to imbue particular bodies with more or less value. Importantly CDA takes account of historic or longitudinal contexts, reflecting values but also promoting change in such values over time (Fairclough, 2013: 445). It is important therefore not only as a methodological tool for investigation but also as a means of instigating change in theory and practice.

CDA is aligned with Critical Social Theory, and therefore concerned with challenging inequality. However, Rogers’ description of CDA as ‘a framework or a set of tools which help us to penetrate to the core of domination, whether it is based in racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism or neo-colonialism’ emphasises the absence of disablism as a concern (Rogers, 2011:5). The compatability of discourse analysis and CDA with disability studies has been clearly established in work that specifically seeks to explore the political importance of language in the construction and representation of disability (Price, 2009; Grue, 2015). Margaret Price (2009a) draws on CDA and disability studies to advance a hybrid methodology recognising that both seek to combine theory and activism in their concern for the value of human difference. Rogers’ use of CDA to examine decision-making processes in education for children with so-called special needs has also brought her work clearly into the domain of disability studies (Rogers, 2002).

In this study CDA offered an established methodological approach in order to carry out a ‘crip’ reading of documentation describing the quality of learning and teaching in art and design education. In order ‘to crip’ art and design education, in order to read art and design education from an anti-ableist stance, means here to apply a critique of existing discourses (language and practice) prior to reconfiguring these from an anti-ableist position. This aligns the application of crip theory to CDA since both seek to promote a critique of social and political practices as well as build alternative realities (Rogers, 2011:5). A starting point for ‘re-visioning’ art and design education (Slee, 2011:150) from a committed anti-ableist position relies on a process of continuous destabilisation advocated by McRuer in order to reveal ableist discourses. In his discussion of the relationship between language and ideology Fairclough (2013:59) acknowledges that CDA is too often employed to emphasise the reproductive rather than transformative nature of language. Rogers et al (2005:376) also identify the limitations of CDA as a ‘tool for critique than as a tool for re-imagining the social world’. A methodology incorporating the transformative ambitions of crip theory may therefore serve to strengthen this dimension of CDA. Price describes the act of cripping as transitive, whilst reminding us of the uncertainty of ‘What lies on the other side of transition?’ (Price in McRuer and Johnson, 2014:154). A Critical crip Discourse Analysis (CcDA) therefore continues to provoke transformation through crises and uncertainty rather than satisficing with neat resolutions. This enables us to interrogate constructions of ability in art education with and through discourses that can be read as ‘purposeful failure[s] to accomplish the unreal (and perhaps unrealisable) objectives of normalisation’ (Mitchell et al, 2015: 80). In order to fully recognise the value and contribution that art education can make, it is therefore important to acknowledge the minds and bodies that are purged by ableist practice.

CcDA requires a very specific emphasis on the role of language in reimagining the social world as anti-ableist. Fairclough (2010:445) indicates that discourses are ‘not only representations of how things are, they can also be representations of how things could be’. He describes these possibilities as ‘imaginaries’. Reimagining discourses concerning art education from an anti-ableist stance may be one way of re-working the social value of so called able-bodied/able-mindedness and its representation and reproduction in educational processes. However, Fairclough acknowledges the difficulties inherent in trying to realise such ‘imaginaries’ when they are resisted by structural or institutional rigidities. The emphasis on the language of special needs at the intersection of disability and education is an example of rigidity in educational policy and practices and any attempt to re-vision art education from an anti-ableist stance may be inhibited by the ‘formation of (relative) permanences which may limit the dialectical flow’ and subsequent shift to anti-ableist practice in art education (Fairclough, 2013:444). Acknowledging the relationship between discourses, referred to here as intertextuality, can help us to recognise where values can shift freely or where they appear to be more stubborn and enduring. A first stage in re-visioning art education from an anti-ableist stance must therefore begin with an analysis of existing texts that describe and form our understanding of pedagogic practice in art education in order to recognise possibilities for change.

It is important to emphasise that this project does not aim to analyse educational practices in art, craft and design but the ways in which such practices are reported via existing regulatory frameworks. Rogers et al (2011:384) recognise this bias towards written language in CDA and the limitations of analysing written texts as a means of exploring educational practice. They recommend more emphasis be placed on the ‘intricacies of classroom talk’ in order to understand the micro interactions rather than macro relations (p.377). However, reporting on classroom talk would also have distinct limitations in attempting to gain insight into art education. The importance of materiality, working with and thinking through materials via creative practice cannot be captured in documentary form or reports of spoken dialogue, although multimodal approaches offered by Kress would surely be beneficial in this respect (Kress, 2011). Although Rogers et al describe the analysis of documents as decontextualized rather than interactional data they are still significant in offering authoritative views about art education. Of particular relevance to this project is an exploration of the processes by which ability and disability become reified through inspection and reporting processes. It is vital to discuss the relative values attributed to ability and disability in these reports on practice in art education since these form part of the subtle and coercive frameworks that shape societal beliefs about disability and education (Foucault, 1980).

**Drawing Together and Making a Mark: The objects of enquiry**

This study analysed two triennial subject reports for art, craft and design education produced by the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) the regulatory body for standards in education in England and Wales. *Drawing* *Together* (2009) a 53 page document with 33 images reported on the quality of art, craft and design education between 2005-2008 and the follow-up report *Making a Mark (2012)* a 66 page with 43 images reported on activity between2008/11. The documents are the most recent subject reports for art education and selected in order to examine contemporary representations of art education. It is worth noting that inclusion was a central concern in both reports and a strong dialectical theme that connected the two documents. The authors of *Making a Mark* were explicit in their aims to respond to concerns relating to inclusion identified in the earlier report *Drawing Together* emphasisingthe role of the report in evaluating the success of schools ‘in promoting inclusion and high achievement for all’ (Ofsted, 2012:1). Drawing Together was explicit in exploring ‘the contribution of art, craft and design education to pupils’ inclusion, creativity and community’ (Ofsted, 2009:2). The title of the first report, *Drawing Together,* works on a number of levels to emphasise inclusive principles of communal participation through arts practice. However, the documents have a particular emphasis on gender and participation stemming from an on-going concern about the numbers of boys opting to study the subject at examination level. A significant emphasis is given to this in the documents via text and in the disproportionate numbers of boys represented in images. However, this does not form a significant part of the analysis presented here.

Analysing Ofsted subject reports provides an opportunity to identify dominant discourses in education. Although removed from practice these are important summaries of and reports on educational practices providing a particularly condensed perspective on the ways in which educational discourses can reinforce or resist disabling practices. Understanding what happens, in practice in pedagogic encounters between art educators and disabled children and young people is an essential area for further exploration but art education is also subject to a range of regulatory discourses which determine our understanding of art education. These written and visual forms of documentation are no less important in any attempt to understand, challenge and potentially re-shape pedagogic practice.

**A Method for Critical Crip Discourse Analysis**

Specific methods for CDA are not always made explicit enough to reflect the systematic nature of this enquiry (Rogers et al, 2005). This section therefore outlines the approach used in order to more fully illustrate the particular reading that a Critical crip Discourse Analysis might afford. A first stage was an initial reading and annotation of both documents noting the style, key headings and images present in order to become more familiar with the texts. A second systematic reading aimed to identify the construction of normalcy in the documents via a reading of good and limited practice in art and design education since the reports sought to highlight the range of experiences observed by inspectors in schools. This range offers a partial insight into the types of art practices currently experienced by pupils and innovative and limited practices can both contribute to our understanding of the ways in which ability to participate in art education is constructed. Any reading of these documents that centered solely on explicit references to disability could only be partial since their resonance could only be fully appreciated when juxtaposed with normative representations of ability and participation. This approach was also significant in resisting an immediate tendency to read ableism into the text without recognising its more subtle construction throughout the documents.

A multimodal reading of the texts included the identification of images with a particular emphasis on those showing children, young people and their teachers engaged in art education practice (e.g. making art work or engaging in gallery-based activities). The 76 images present in both documents were therefore reduced to 33 (23 images in Drawing *Together* and 10 images in *Making a Mark*) in order to concentrate representations of children and young people rather than the art, craft and design work included. Images were given a written description in order to explore the nature of the representation in the photograph. The image and descriptions were analysed with the accompanying text on the page in order to explore levels of coherence or dissonance across both modes of representation. For example, a student commented ‘My view of art totally changed. What is art? Not only visual things are art. This was the most beneficial project we have ever done in respect of understanding art’ yet this was set alongside two images which reinforced observational drawing as a primary form of response to sculptural installations in a gallery setting (Ofsted, 2009: 20). These pieces of text (discourse) were analysed with attention paid to transitive verbs, words denoting what pupils and teachers were doing (e.g. children ‘painted boldly’). A further stage explored the social practice performed by the document (Discourse) where potentially ableist discourses were noted through the application of crip theory, acknowledging the minds/bodies that were purged through representations of art education via images and text. A final stage in the analysis paid explicit attention to the presence of disability in the documents in order to triangulate the representations of ability and disability.

**The construction of normalcy in art education**

The normative representations identified from the analysis are represented under the following three headings: The Seeing Body/Mind, The Dexterous Body/Mind, The Independent Body/Mind. The body/mind distinction is made here in order to emphasise the connections between physical and cognitive engagement in art education, recognising the relationship between material and embodied experience of practice and their relationship with cognition or learning. For example, seeing is prioritised as *the* means of conceptualising art education through observation and drawing and this reinforces vision as thedominant way in which pupils develop their understanding of the world. Particular forms of dexterity through the touch of the hand or manipulation of materials using fine motor skills are predominant in our understanding of material ways of knowing with touch by hand the most likely compensation for sight. Independence is reinforced in neo-liberal ableist policies that require us to be able to act and understand as autonomous beings (DfE, 2015) regardless of significant arguments for relational ontologies that assert that we come to know by *being-with* (Nancy, 2004). These three themes developed more fully below represent the dominant normative representations of bodies/minds in art education in these documents leading to a further discussion of the presence and consequences of ableism. A further theme addressing the presence of disability in the curriculum is included and discussed for its relevance in confirming disability as a peripheral and individual concern.

The executive summary of *Making a Mark* begins with the problematic assumption that ‘Children see before they speak, make marks before they write, build before they walk’ (Ofsted, 2012: 1). Although a rhetorical device to emphasise the importance of a good quality art education for *all*, the non-normative experiences of those who will not see, speak, write or walk are negated. The lives and experiences of some disabled children and young people are not only devalued but are effectively erased from our consciousness as educators by the reinforcement of such beliefs through images and text that prioritise the ability to see, speak, write and walk.

**The Seeing Body/Mind**

Ability to participate in art education is heavily reliant on vision and the dominance of visual forms of engagement is reinforced throughout both documents. It is perhaps unsurprising that vision is given such an emphasis in a subject whose origins lie in the development of visual art forms however the documents are critical of an inability to maximise on other forms of experience. This ocularcentricity is evident in art making but also in the ways in which pupils come to understand the work of others since this aspect also emphasises visual rather than tactile qualities (Ofsted, 2008: 7, 20). Pupils and teachers in the majority of images were engaged in close observation whilst producing artwork or whilst in a gallery setting. An image of boys working together on a drawing offers a useful example of this emphasis on close observation (Figure 1 Ofsted, 2008:7). There were a few exceptions to this with a pair of images depicting a child making a plaster sculpture where visual and tactile experience appeared to be equally dominant (Figure 2 Ofsted, 2009:22) and a further image of a child who appears to be enjoying a highly tactile experience with clay (Figure 3 Ofsted, 2009: 29). Interestingly this image is also one of the few to show physical contact between pupil and teacher as they both experience the tactile qualities of clay.

Art education is celebrated in schools for the contribution it makes to the visual environment in the school and teachers ability to exploit pupils’ interests in visual imagery (Ofsted, 2008: 2 -3). It is also recognised for its role for creating a ‘unique climate for learning’ (Ofsted, 2008: 17) confirming vision and visuality as a distinctive feature of this form of education and one that provides an alternative forms of learning to linguistic and language based learning. In one example a visual emphasis was celebrated as a means of compensating for language barriers (Ofsted, 2008: 23). In a further example taken from a special education setting drawing was described as ‘vital for many pupils facing significant challenges in making sense of the world around them and communicating with others’ (Ofsted, 2012: 24). Vision therefore appears to be a prerequisite for making and understanding art and this preference shifts pedagogic practice from ocularcentric to ocularnormative in prioritising and preferring visual forms of aesthetic experience (Bolt, 2014).

**The Dexterous Body/Mind**

Ability to participate also appears to be defined by the use of fine motor skills with a majority of images showing pupils drawing with pen or pencil, cutting, tracing or painting. The texts emphasise drawing as an activity which can and should include ‘wide ranging approaches’ (Ofsted, 2009:2) yet the images presented confirm the ability to draw as synonymous with the ability to hold small drawing instruments such as pens, pencils or small paintbrushes which appear throughout the documents. This emphasis on the need for dexterous hands is evident in both documents confirming good fine motor skills as a normative prerequisite for participation in art education. An example of *Making a Mark* shows a set of 5 images of boys engaged in close work emphasising the co-ordination of hands and vision as they draw, cut and engage in craft-based projects (Figure 4 Ofsted, 2012: 30). The ability to imagine more expansive ideas of bodily engagement is restricted by the close-cropped images of hands suggesting limited conceptions of the types of bodies and the body parts used to make art. The emphasis on hands as the main vehicle for art making relies on simple rather than complex notions of embodiment (Siebers, 2016) reinforced via images of apparently normative bodies of pupils making art. The prominence of working hands results in the erasure not only of the disabled body but of the body more generally. A direct line between eye, hand and brain in the production and interpretation of art works suggests a limited and limiting conceptualisation of the types of bodies that might be included in art education.

**The Independent Body/Mind**

Independence is stipulated as central to successful engagement in art education with norms regarding the desirability of this attribute reinforced on multiple levels through images and text in both documents. Independent work is synonymous with greater creativity (e.g. Ofsted, 2009: 10) with good progress in art education directly aligned with being able to devise, initiate and carry out work independently and with confidence. For example, independence is referred to as a criteria for success in examination and assessment through personal planning and the ability to show an in-depth understanding of the work of other artist and designers. Independence is apparent in descriptions of teacher education and teachers’ continued professional development evident therefore as a desirable trait for learners at all levels (Ofsted, 2009: 18). Early independence is also highly valued in younger learners (Ofsted, 2012:34). In one example, spontaneous play in the snow is presented as independent use of materials to make sculpture (Ofsted, 2012:15). In contrast with this there is also an emphasis on collaboration evident in textual descriptions of desirable attributes and successful projects as well as a range of images showing pupils working together on joint projects (Ofsted, 2009:4). The emphasis here appears to signify independence from teacher direction since teamwork and collaboration between pupils is a means for promoting community ethos (Ofsted, 2012: 11). Independence is also emphasised for pupils as they develop an understanding of the work of others. For example, pupils who are working towards higher levels of qualification are encouraged to initiate visits to galleries. Independence is clearly harnessed to independence of mind as well as body since it is desirable for pupils to arrive at deeper understanding of art through independent means. The need to work with artists who have become ‘financially independent through their art and design work’ contributes to the further reinforcement of this as a desirable attribute for learners (Ofsted, 2008: 41).

**Art Education as Critical Social Practice**

Normative representations of art education confirm the subject as one with the potential to engage pupils in critical social practice. Pupils work with art, craft and design recognising its application to issues relating to equality and diversity. For example, both documents emphasise practices that limit opportunities for boys and inclusive practice is described in terms of ensuring that there are equal opportunities for boys to engage in tactile as well as visual forms of learning (Ofsted,2009: 35). *Drawing Together* cites examples of primary school projects that ‘contributed to anti-racism or confronted gender stereotyping’ (Ofsted, 2009:33) and further examples describe projects that address community, local and global issues (Ofsted, 2009:43). Participation in art education enables students to develop their awareness of equality and diversity. However, disability is not included in the potential for critical social practice and within these documents disability therefore appears to be the ‘last frontier’ of critical social practice’ (Fielder in Mitchell & Snyder, 2015: 66). Disability is only present in discourses relating to special educational needs and does not occupy the critical social position in the curriculum evident with the other aspects of equality and diversity described. Disability is therefore reinforced as an individual problem rather than a social concern.

**What types of bodies/minds are purged in these representations of art education?**

If we rely on these documents as our means for conceptualising art education then those who experience the world in ways other than visual, those who do not rely on fine motor skills and those who remain dependent are purged from our consciousness. It becomes difficult to recognise how non-normative bodies might participate in art education since they are alien to ‘future imaginaries’ (Fairclough, 2010:444). This elimination comes as a result of the excessive emphasis on normative capabilities as well as the exclusion of non-normative experience. This also comes as a result of rare occurances of non-normative experience that appear to result in extraordinary pedagogic practice. Where bodies/minds depart from the norms established above, they are brought explicitly to our attention via special pedagogic interventions, which place them on the periphery of art education with therapeutic and compensatory approaches dominating the creative dimensions of their education. I argue here that the inclusion of non-normative bodies and the subsequent attention to special pedagogies is a means by which such bodies are purged from art education since the particular actions of the teachers and teaching assistants are emphasised over pupils’ creative practice.

Disabled children and young people appear excessively dependent since non-normative minds/bodies appear to require particular sensitivity and specialist attention from their teachers. The discourses of independence that pervade both documents sharpen the contrast when presented with descriptions of support for pupils identified as having so called special educational needs. This specialist support is described with particular attention given to pupils’ impairments rather than their creative potential. In one example ‘highly skilled teaching ensured that two partially sighted students made excellent progress’ and we are informed that ‘the teacher sensitively supported the student’ (Ofsted, 2012: 22). The high level of skill and sensitivity is required as a result of the pupils’ impairment and shadows the subject specialist knowledge underpinning the teaching. The teacher might occupy a privileged position as art specialist here but is without the specific embodied experiences of the student. Although this presence of pupils with visual impairment may appear to contradict my arguments regarding erasure, the representation of sensory impairment and art education emphasises the difference in value of ways of seeing. We are informed that for one pupil the final image had ‘remarkable power as an image because it reflected, literally, the disconnected way in which the young artist saw the world’ (p.22). Although potentially very positive for its recognition of the young person as an artist and acknowledgement of the creative potential of this difference the description emphasises sight loss and compensatory practice. There is however a sense of the value brought by recognising different forms of vision and visuality yet the experience of learning with visual impairment is highlighted as remarkable when set against the ocularnormative discourses that pervade both documents. The impossibility of realising art practice as reliant on anything other than visual experience is problematic when framing art education for all. Pedagogical approaches here are valued for their capacity to enable the pupil to engage in ocularnormative practices and the creative product becomes a way for others to become informed about the young person’s apparent disconnect from usual experience.

This next example describes drawing activities for pupils identified as having special educational needs who attended a special school ‘which caters for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and those with complex autism’ (2012:24):

*Drawing was also seen as a core component in developing students’ mark-making control as a stepping-stone towards writing. Drawing activities provided exciting reasons to draw, often involving touching, listening and looking, or reference to events in students’ lives. Staff went to great lengths to give all students access to drawing, for example making use of, and adapting, standing frames, or new technologies such as interactive plasma screens, to help students overcome physical barriers* (2012: 24).

The dominance of literacy-based learning is evident in this discussion of drawing that shifts swiftly to a concern with writing preparation and pupils’ drawings appear to be valued less as creative products than preparatory exercises for writing confirming the accomplishment of particular literacy practices as the ultimate educational aim. Drawing operates here as a potentially normalizing practice by enabling pupils’ to develop the motor skills required to produce handwriting. However, the drawing opportunities described are also expansive and prioritise more than the visual with touching and listening accompanying the need to look and the starting points for the project are informed by the lives and experiences of pupils. The success of the drawing activity was recognised as ‘a strong motivation for staff to be innovative in providing further stimulating opportunities for drawing’ (p24). Although offering potentially useful insights into practice there is an emphasis on the ‘great lengths’ that the teachers and teaching assistants must go to in order enable their participation. Non-normative bodies are positioned beyond usual pedagogic practice in art education, not necessarily by the art teachers concerned but certainly by the authors of the report. The ‘great lengths’ described here could have been described as ‘reasonable adjustments’ and instead there is a sense that art teachers are working with bodies that are dependent on extraordinary teaching methods.

We can also identify an absence of disability as a social concern in the art curriculum. Differences marked as ‘disabilities’ are only described as difficulties to be overcome. This is made explicit in a discussion of strategies to promote equality and diversity which include ‘*reference to artists, craftmakers and designers whose work challenged gender or ethnic stereotypes, or showed how disabilities had been overcome’* (Ofsted, 2012: 43). Rather than accepting opportunities to ‘deviate from core curricular teachings’ such descriptions suggest an adherence to pedagogies that have emerged from a need to normalise difference (Mitchell, 2016 p.77). This is significant in positioning disabled children and young people as other and disability is depoliticised in comparison to gender or ethnicity where stereotypes might be effectively challenged through engagement with arts practice. The embodied experience of non-normative bodies/minds do not appear to be valued for their creative potential since educational practices appear to confirm their experience as ones that should be negated or neutralised in order to be able to ‘pass’ as creative. The suggestion here is that children and young people can learn from those who have overcome rather than experienced disability.

**Conclusion: Is it possible to re-imagine an anti-ableist art education?**

Ableist conceptions of art education reduce our abilities to imagine an art education *for all* by limiting our ability to comprehend non-normative experiences and responses.

The result is that when encountered such minds/bodies appear as if problematic thus requiring specialist interventions and particular sensitivity. Following Mitchell et al (2015) I argue that non-normative failures can become opportunities for developing educational practices by extending our understanding of experience as well as the range of aesthetic responses. Re-visioning art education from a committed anti-ableist position would require us to return to first principles and revisit the meaning and purpose of art education. If pedagogical approaches in art education are designed to promote the ability to work with materials in order to make an aesthetic response to experience then we need to value material ways of knowing, expand the range of aesthetic responses and extend our understanding of what we value as experience. However, the ability to re-imagine educational practice is perhaps always limited by a lack of concrete examples and so I offer some brief and initial steps in how this might be achieved.

The first step requires a revision of deficit-based guidance regarding special educational needs. The four ‘broad areas of need’ outlined in the current UK code of practice as deficits in communication and interaction, cognition and learning, social, emotional and mental health difficulties and sensory and/or physical needs (DfE, 2015: 97) should be re-designated as four areas for design. Future art educators would therefore consider expansive definitions of physical, sensory and cognitive and emotional diversity as a means for developing creative and flexible briefs for their art lessons. For example, an art lesson would no longer take observational drawing as a single starting point since an expansive definition of observation would embrace a range of sensory experiences. Pupils and teachers could work with more expansive definitions of ‘observation’ exploring ocularnormativity and sensory diversity as a means for understanding the development of contemporary art practices that engage with multi-sensory approaches. Lessons would consider an expansive range of approaches for communication and interaction not only between teacher and learner but also as a means for encouraging pupils to consider a range of ways by which they might make their work accessible to others. Teachers would consider a greater range of cognitive diversity as well as encouraging learners to consider how their work might be understood and communicated to a diverse audience. The creative and pedagogic gains of diversity would be fully explored through this re-designation of the broad areas of need.

Next, art education would be enhanced by art teachers who represent diverse body/minds but who also have more opportunities to engage with diversity as part of their teacher education. Art teachers would develop a concept of pedagogic practice as one that is informed by disabled children and young people as creators and shapers of experience and art practice. An anti-ableist art education must question and then extend what counts as an aesthetic response. Art educators would shape learning outcomes with learners and these would be expansive and determined by pupils’ creative capabilities and interests. The lives and experiences of disabled children, young people, artists and art teachers would be valued as a resource.

Finally, the current emphasis on independent work would be relegated. An anti-ableist art education would recognise the importance of interdependence between pupils but also between art teacher and learner. This re-visioning would require sensitive pedagogic relationships informed by embodied experiences of what it means to make art. Such sensitivity would be acknowledged as significant for all learners rather than peculiar to the few. Interdependence would be recognised and valued as an approach that has been employed in art, craft and design production over time as well as in contemporary art practices. An anti-ableist art curriculum would therefore fully deploy the creative potential of the subject valuing disabled people as artists, activists and teachers in securing a cultural entitlement *for all*.

**References**

Adams, J. (2014) Finding Time to Make Mistakes *International Journal of Art and Design Education* 33(1) p.2-5.

Atkinson, D. (2011) *Art, Equality and Learning: Pedagogies Against the State* Rotterdam: Sense Publishers*.*

Atkinson, D. & Dash, P. (2005) *Social and Critical Practices in Art Education* Staffordshire/Sterling:Trentham Books Ltd.

Ball, S.J. (2013) *The Education Debate* Bristol: policy press.

Barad, K. (2003) Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Undersanding of How Matter Comes to Matter *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 28 (3)* pp.801 – 831.

Barton, L. (1986) The Politics of Special Educational Needs *Disability, Handicap and Society* 9 (3) pp.273 – 290.

Barton, L. and Tomlinson, S. (1984) *Special education and social interests.* London: Harper Row.

Blandy, D. (1991) ‘Conceptions of Disability: Toward a Sociopolitical Orientation to Disability for Art Education’ *Studies in Art Education* 32, 3 pp.131 – 144.

Blandy, D. (1994) Assuming Responsibility: Disability Rights and the Preparation of Art Educators Studies in Art Education 35(3) 179 – 187.

Bolt, D. 2014b. *The metanarrative of blindness: A re-reading of twentieth-century Anglophone writing.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Cambell, F.K. (2009) Contours of Ableism: Territories, objects, disability and desire London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dash, P. (2010) *African Caribbean Pupils in Art Education Rotterdam:* Sense Publishers.

Davis, L. (1995) *Enforcing Normalcy – Disability, Deafness and the Body* London/New York: Verso

Derby, J. (2012) ‘Art Education and Disability Studies’ *Disability Studies Quarterly 32 (1)* [*http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3027/3054*](http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3027/3054)[accessed 04.04.2016].

Department for Education (2015) Special Educational Needs and disability code of practice: 0 – 25 years <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf> [accessed 04/04/2016]

Eisner, E. (1972) *Educating Artistic Vision* New York: Macmillan.

Fairclough, N. (2003) Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research London: Routledge.

Fairclough, N. (2013) Critical Discourse Analysis – The Critical Study of Language Oxon/New York:Routledge.

Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* New York: Pantheon Books.

Gee, J.P. (2011) Discourse Analysis: What Makes It Critical in Rogers, R. (ed) An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education London/New York. Routledge. (pp 23 – 45)

Grue, J. (2015) *Disability and Discourse Analysis* Surrey/Burlington: Ashgate

Hatton, K. (ed) (2015) Towards and Inclusive Arts Education, London: Trentham Books.

Hughes, A. (1998) Reconceptualising the Art Curriculum *International Journal of Art and Design Education 17 (1) pp. 41 – 49.*

Johnson, M. L. & McRuer, R. (2014) Cripistemologies: Introduction Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies 8(2) pp.127 – 147.

Kress, G. (2011) Discourse Analysis and Education: A multimodal approach in Rogers, R. (ed) An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education London/New York. Routledge. (pp.205 – 226)

Kuppers, P. (2014) *Studying Disability Arts and Culture – An Introduction* New York: Palgrave/Macmillan.

Lowenfeld, V. (1957) *Creative and Mental Growth (3rd edition)* New York/London: The MacMillan Company.

McRuer, R. (2006) *Crip Theory – Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* New York University Press.

McRuer, R. Johnson, M.L. (2014) Proliferating Cripistemologies – A Virtual Roundtable *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* pp.149 – 169.

Michael, J. (1982) *The Lowenfeld Lectures - Viktor Lowenfeld on Art Education and Therapy* University Park/London: The Pennslyvania State University Press.

Mitchell, D.T. & Snyder, S. L. (2015) The Biopolitics of Disability – Neoliberalism, Ablenationism , and Peripheral Embodiment Ann Arbour: University of Michigan Press.

Moore, M. & Slee, R. (2012) Disability studies, inclusive education and exclusions in Watson, N., Roulstone, A. & Thomas, C. (eds) *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*. Routledge, pp. 225-239.

NSEAD (2016) The National Society for Education in Art and Design Survey Report 2015-16 <http://www.nsead.org/downloads/survey.pdf> [accessed 04.04.2016]

Ofsted (2009) *Drawing Together: art, craft and design in schools* Manchester: Ofsted <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/10624/1/Drawing%20together.pdf> [accessed 04.04.2016]

Ofsted (2012) *Making a Mark: art, craft and design* Manchester: Ofsted. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/art-craft-and-design-education-making-a-mark> [accessed 04.04.2016]

Penketh, C. (2015) **‘**Special Educational Needs and Art and Design Education: Plural Perspectives on Exclusion’ *Journal of Education Policy iFirst.*

Penketh, C. (2011) *A Clumsy Encounter: Drawing and Dyspraxia* Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Price, M. (2009) Access Imagined: The Construction of Disability in Policy Documents. *Disability Studies Quarterly* 29.1

Read, H. (1967) Education Through Art London: Faber and Faber.

Rogers, R. (2011) ‘Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis’ in *Critical Discourse Analysis in Education* 2nd edition London: Routledge.

Rogers, R. (2002). Through the eyes of the institution: A critical discourse analysis of decision making in two special education meetings. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 33*(2), 213-237.

Rogers, R., Malancharuvil-Berkes, E.,Mosley, M., Hui, D. & O’Garro, G. (2005) Critical Discourse Analysis in Education: A Review of the Literature *Review of Educational Research* 75(3) pp.365-416.

Siebers, T. (2015) Introduction: Disability and Visual Culture *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies 9(3) pp. 239-246.*

Slee, R. (2011) *The Irregular School – Exclusion, schooling and inclusive education* Oxon/New York: Routledge.

UNESCO (2006) *Road Map for Arts Education* [*http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php URL\_ID=30335&URL\_DO=DO\_TOPIC&URL\_SECTION=201.html*](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID%3D30335%26URL_DO%3DDO_TOPIC%26URL_SECTION%3D201.html)[accessed 04.04.2016]

Wendell, S.(1989) Towards a Feminist Theory of Disability *Hypatia* 4.2 pp. 104-24.