

# Opening up opportunities: PGCE secondary art and design trainees experiences of teaching pupils with VI in art education

## Research aim:

To use phenomenography to explore the experiences of PGCE secondary art and design trainees at one HEI in the Northwest of England as they facilitated an art education project (based on the theme war and peace) for pupils identified as having a VI, at a specialist school for VI and other needs.

## Research questions:

- What are PGCE trainees' perceptions towards the training they received prior to facilitating the art education project?
- What are the different attitudes demonstrated by PGCE trainees towards working with pupils identified as having VI?
- To what extent have PGCE trainees been able to develop their teaching practice as a result of the opportunity to facilitate an art education project for pupils identified as having VI?

## Three categories of experience were used to answer the research questions:

**Empathy** – having insight into pupils' perspectives and putting the skills learnt during VI training into practice during the art education project.

**Self-efficacy** – developing effective working relationships with pupils, which can be applied to future teaching practice.

**Advocacy** - developing a professional conduct, which includes demonstrating effective communication skills.

## Findings

### Empathy

VI training can provide an understanding and awareness of VI (French, 1992; Silverman, 2015; Maher, et al, 2021), but it cannot replicate the everyday experiences of individuals identified as having VI (Silverman, 2015; Silverman, et al, 2015). Even, it might be problematic to attempt to represent VI (Maher, et al, 2021). Despite this, VI training may provide a pedagogical learning experience, creating greater knowledge and awareness of VI, subsequently increasing empathetic (Quicke, 1985; Flower, et al, 2007; Barney, 2012) responses.

### Self-efficacy

Theoretical knowledge provided to PGCE trainees during training does not necessarily echo what they expect to learn and then put into practice, thus leading to apprehensions (Winter, 2006; Hodkinson, 2009; Florian & Rouse, 2010). However, opportunities to reflect on experiences working with pupils identified as having SEN, can be beneficial in developing attitudes (Mullaney, 2017; Hodkinson, 2010), increasing PGCE trainees' confidence (NASUWT, 2008; Richards, 2010; Carter, 2015; Coates, et al, 2020) and self-efficacy (Golder, et al, 2009; Coates, et al, 2020), when working with pupils with a range of SEN.

### Advocacy

Opportunities to engage in SEN placements during ITT can be beneficial to trainees in improving their communication strategies, (Herold & Dandolo, 2009) equipping them with skills to assist pupils in accessing the curriculum (Dessent, 1987). However, there is often uncertainty held by teachers related to learning the necessary skills required to adapt teaching, for pupils with a range of SEN (Garner, 2001; NASUWT, 2008). PGCE trainees have become professional advocates for pupils identified as having SEN.

## Contribution to knowledge

The research has found that PGCE trainees were able to:

- Gain a greater insight and understanding of the perspectives of pupils identified as having VI.
- Critique different aspects of teaching and the actions of others when working with pupils.
- Develop a professional conduct when working with pupils, through effective communication.

