



Inclusive Education through the Lens of Diversity: A Case Study in an Arts School with a Focus on Chinese Students


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ENG Abstract: The purpose of this research is to determine the influence of a collaborative art project between a museum and a public school on the process of inclusion, which involves Chinese children and their parents. This qualitative study is based on 9 months of observation of Art-Based Project (ABP) activities in the school and the museum, as well as interviews with parents, museum technicians, and instructors. The Tandem Project immersed in interculturalism, employing ABP and a Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)-based curriculum developed collaboratively by the school and the museum. The findings imply that Tandem Project included in this art project have a positive impact on Chinese children's language ability, participation in school activities, furthermore, children's inclusion and family involvement has been improved. As a result, the first technique for including immigrant children is to assist their parents.

Keywords: Multicultural school, ABP, VTS, Museum, Participation

ES Educación inclusiva a través de la lente de la diversidad: un estudio de caso en una escuela de artes centrado en estudiantes chinos

Resumen: El objetivo de esta investigación es determinar la influencia de un proyecto artístico de colaboración entre un museo y una escuela pública en el proceso de inclusión, en el que participan niños chinos y sus padres. Este estudio cualitativo se basa en 9 meses de observación de las actividades del Proyecto Basado en el Arte (ABP) en la escuela y el museo, así como en entrevistas con padres, técnicos del museo e instructores. En el Proyecto Tándem estaban inmersos el interculturalismo, que emplea el ABP, y el currículo basado en las Estrategias de Pensamiento Visual (VTS) desarrollado por el colegio y el museo. Los resultados implican que el Proyecto Tándem incluido en este proyecto de arte tiene un impacto positivo en la capacidad lingüística de los niños chinos, la participación en actividades escolares, además, la inclusión de los niños y la participación de la familia se ha mejorado. En consecuencia, la primera técnica para incluir a los niños inmigrantes es ayudar a sus padres.

Palabras clave: Escuela multicultural, ABP, VTS, Museo, Participación.

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1. Introduction

The number of Immigrant students' in Spain has climbed up dramatically in past 20 years, in Spanish public complementary educational system, immigrant student occupy 10% (Educación, 2022). However, according to scholars, the immigrant achievement in PISA (2019), the academic achievement of immigrant students is not satisfactory. There are many researches proved that parents involve may influence the students' social achievement (Dell'Anna et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2020; Pavri & Luftig, 2001; Schuelka, 2018).

Many students with immigrant backgrounds are classified as having specific educational needs (SEN) due to their complete or partial lack of knowledge of the Spanish language (Rojas Tejada et al., 2012). This SEN was more significant for pupils from non-Spanish-speaking countries under Catalonia's bilingualism. Students from immigrant backgrounds may suffer in academic performance due to language barriers, which is one reason for the high dropout rates among students from immigrant backgrounds. Another factor that affects immigrant students dropping out of school is whether there is a language barrier in the interaction between parents and schools. Studies have shown that language barriers in parent-school interactions are positively correlated with immigrant student dropout rates (Driscoll, 1999; Obinna & Ohanian, 2020).

It is the obligation and responsibility of educational institutions to ensure that every child learns in mainstream school at a proper way. According to UNESCO, inclusive education is based on the notion that education is a fundamental human right and lays the groundwork for a society that is more just. No matter their unique traits or challenges, all students have a right to an education. Inclusive education is a reform that will bring diverse students into mainstream education globally (UNESCO, 2001, 2017). Comparing with the traditional education model, IE focus on the student's achievement not only in academic achievement but also social achievement, such as social emotion, social relationship, or cooperation (Dell'Anna et al., 2022; Pavri & Luftig, 2001; Schuelka, 2018).

Our educational aims are inextricably linked to how we ensure that every kid is eager to engage in school life. The purpose of education in our fast-changing environment is not just to impart knowledge, as that knowledge will soon expire, and different professions will likewise change quickly. Additionally, it would be crucial to impart a skill that would enable the students to learn on their own after finishing their coursework or to collaborate with others or traverse the world safely (Pusztai, 2021).

Art-Based Project (ABP) (Liang et al., 2023), like Project-based Learning (PBL), is an learner-centered and inter-disciplined method in which variety students can develop their own project tasks (Hawari & Noor, 2020; Lai, 2021). It was used in satisfying children's special needs (Baiden, 2021; Rihter & Potočnik, 2022). However, PBL has been stated that it is difficult to design an effective teaching technique and select appropriate projects (Hawari & Noor, 2020). Meanwhile, ABP is supported by comparable instructional methodologies and abundant project resources comparing with PBL (Liang et al., 2023).

Like a microcosm of other immigrant countries, Catalonia has a large number of multicultural schools. Multicultural schools are vital in this environment. They foster cultural awareness, sensitivity, and understanding, all of which are necessary for a more harmonious and inclusive society. In the following part, we will present an investigation carried out in a multicultural school in Barcelona, with the objective: identifying the principal barrier and general benefits of an art project applied Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), based on the interaction among a museum, a public school and local Chinese community, about how this project influences in the process of inclusion and participation of Chinese children.

As a result, this article is structured as follows: analysis of the literature, methodology approach, analysis of data, present results and discussion, with the conclusion at the end.

2. Literature review

2.1. Arts and Education

The earlier application of visual thinking strategy (VTS) started in the late 20th century. It is mainly used in teaching in the medical field. Philip Yenawine and Abigail Housen (1996) jointly proposed the VTS in the last decade of the twenty century in United States. Nowadays VTS is used in museum education as a strategy to get closer to the community. VTS is a developmentally oriented method that encourages peer engagement and gradually increases the ability of solving problems (Yenawine, 2013). Housen (2002) also demonstrated that the VTS technique may be used to reform the course material.

Some investigators applied this strategy to improve participants' **academic achievement**. For example, after several sessions, they found participants' language abilities improved, such as writing skills (Letts & Richmond, 2012; Rosaida, 2021; Villasor, 2018), critical thinking and intellectual development (Burchenal & Grohe, 2007). Some authors focused on the **social skills** that VTS may improve. They proved that VTS may improve students' communication skills between peer patterners (Abedi et al., 2022).

However, most of those investigations are short-time sessions (Li et al., 2023), usually using qualitative analysis for the data. Nevertheless, there are barely any investigations about Chinese primary students in Spain or even Europe, for the lack of language and cultural background of the investigator. Therefore, the investigation of long term ABP for immigrant faces a lack of further investigation.

2.2. Inclusive Education and Multicultural School

There are various definitions of Inclusive Education (IE). Ainscow et al. (2006) defined IE to include equity, participation, community, compassion, respect for variety, sustainability, and entitlement. Florian (2015) highlights the importance of sociocultural context in determining learners' individual requirements, which is more

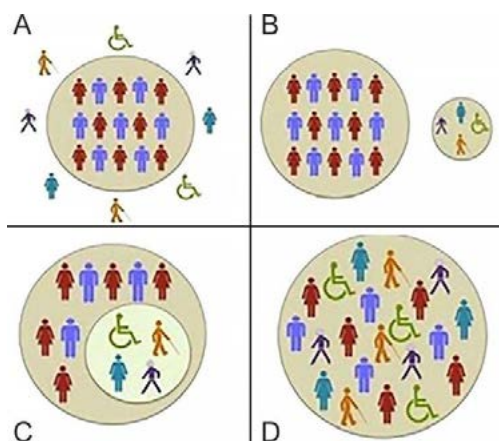
convincing. In this context, teachers become to the center of creating the environment and conditions in which inclusiveness thrives.

The development of IE with diverse culture in the world is inconsistent. In North America, the goal of encouraging multilingualism is undermined by assimilation and multiculturalism strategies (Alcántara et al., 2023). In Europe, the module is focusing on the interculturalism, which emphasis the interaction between different cultures. See Figure 1 and Figure 2. However, there is still in tendency in some European country that the education systems have tended to develop linguistic hegemony and maintain cultural uniformity, making it difficult for schools to support students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Alcántara et al., 2023).

The challenge of providing quality IE is widespread. For example, research showed that the language support plan for immigrants was ineffective, and that policy on the learner’s perspective be revisited (Hoffmann et al., 2021) . Nowadays, the additional linguistic support as scaffolding (Harju-Autti et al., 2022) or taking transitional classes (Hoffmann et al., 2021) for students who have a language barrier are the main strategies for the first step of inclusion for students with diversity background. By comprising the academic achievement, students with native parents engage in more cognitive and agentic, activities than students with immigrant parents (Veiga et al., 2023). On the other hand, relating to the dropout rate under this background, research presented that peer acceptance exhibited a substantial negative connection with school dropout intentions and poor self-esteem only for immigrants (Bianchi et al., 2021).

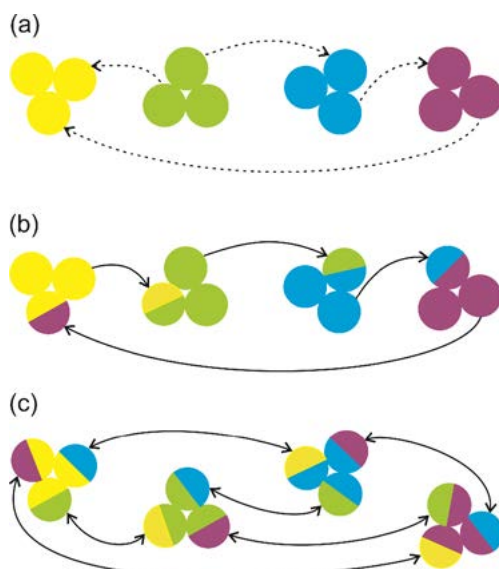
In Spain, Harry Beth (Harry, 2005) discovered that teachers can differentiate between pupils’ cultural needs and cognitive difficulties in practice. However, the one-way approach of assimilation continues to dominate the educational system. In Catalonia, research showed that ethnic prejudice prevents teachers’ formation of positive attitudes and judgments towards divers culture (Pace et al., 2022). Meanwhile, investigations usually are more about overcoming barrier, but limited by the language specific types (lanos et al., 2017; lanos et al., 2019).

Figure 1. Definition of (A)Exclusion-(B)Segregation-(C)Integration-(D)Inclusion



Note: Graphic representations of Inclusion vs. Exclusion, Segregation, and Integration. Adapted from Brem (2016) .

Figure 2. Image illustrating (a) multicultural (b) cross-cultural and (c) intercultural



Note: Adapted from Schneider and Heinecke (Schneider & Heinecke, 2019, P14)

Catalonia is one of the regions which applied bilingualism (Juarros–Daussà & Lanz, 2009; Newman et al., 2008). Under the bilingualism (Spanish and Catalan), the inclusion of those immigrant students becomes more difficult (Reyes & Carrasco, 2018).

Considering the social culture achievement of IE, two theory related to the multicultural school will be mentioned. One is Cultural Iceberg Theory of Edward T. Hall, and the other is the Field Theory of Pierre Bourdieu.

The cultural iceberg theory suggests that visible aspects of a culture, such as language, food, and clothing, are only a small portion of what makes up a culture. Beneath the surface lie deeper, often unspoken, elements such as values, beliefs, and assumptions, which have a greater impact on how people in that culture think and behave.

Fields, according to Bourdieu, is a structured space of positions that define a relational structure of forces capable of producing specific types of practices (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Huhn et al., 1993). Fields are social areas defined by a set of norms, customs, and values that govern how individuals and groups interact with one another.

Bourdieu distinguished numerous types of fields, including those of artistic creation, education, and politics. In the context of children's experiences, the field can be divided into two categories: formal and informal. The formal space includes classrooms and venues for whole-school assemblies, such as classrooms, the school building, the playground, the museum, and hallways, where activities are planned and coordinated by instructors. In informal spaces, such as the neighborhood and the home, children are responsible for their own actions (Welply, 2020). The formal spaces are structured and governed by certain and more prescribed interactions, informal spaces are freer. However, the line between these formal and informal spaces is fluid. Therefore, the influence of behavior from both spaces may come across the line and enter to the other space. As a result, this article discusses formal and informal school places from the perspectives of teachers and parents.

3. Methodology Approach

3.1. Context and participants

Institut Escola Artes (IEA) is a public school in the District *Sants-Montjuic* of Barcelona in Catalonia province. It is a diverse neighborhood with a mix of Spanish, immigrant, and international populations. IEA has 90% students from diverse cultural background who come from outside of Spain, which usually are underdeveloped areas. IEA operate its art curriculum with many other institutions. For example, it has a cooperated relationship with the *Museo Nacional d'Art de Catalunya* (MNAC), through Tandem Project.

In this research, we'll focus on the collaboration project between MNAC and IEA. Since the academic year 2013-2014, the MNAC has been working together with the IEA within the framework of the Tandem Project. This project, backed by the city's Department of Education and the Catalonia Foundation *La Pedrera*, aims to improve educational performance in challenging school settings. A long-term connection is developed with the purpose of enriching the educational experience, and improving academic results through art. The educational levels offered at the school spanned from early childhood education through the sixth grade of primary department.

The following areas of work have been prioritized based on the school's reality: A methodological shift centered on ABP in which art and artistic history play an essential role. The project in each course are organized around an area of study chosen by the students and teachers.

In this qualitative research, the teachers of the school, the director, the Chinese students from first grade to sixth grade, and parents, and the museum technicians participated.

There are twelve Chinese students in IEA in primary department for the academic year 2019-2020, which is comprised of the locally born children, first generation immigrants who recently moved to Spain. They are separated into 4 different groups:

First Grade (5 years old), 24 students, one of whom is Chinese;

Second Grade (7 years old), 24 students, three of whom are Chinese;

Fifth Grade (10 years old), 23 students, three of whom are Chinese;

Sixth Grade (11 years old), 25 students, five of whom are Chinese.

All the participants come from low-income family. For ethical reasons, all participants' names are designated by single letters.

3.2. Criteria of Inclusion and exclusion

As many scholars pointed out that social achievement is a significant aim of inclusive education (Pavri & Luftig, 2001; Reicher, 2010; Robo, 2014; Schuelka, 2018), under this context, students' participation, family involvement, cooperation of students, will be considered as perspective of inclusion based on Tandem Project.

3.3. Process of investigation

Case study approach is used in this study because of the research background and research objectives. This method is founded on Heidegger's phenomenological research paradigm (Heidegger, 1962, reprinted in 2001)

and is suited to the investigation of contemporary conditions, particularly research questions beginning with why and how (Yin, 2018). Furthermore, case study is particularly well suited to the investigation of specific phenomena and circumstances, as well as the comprehension of real-life scenarios. Case study, on the other hand, can provide rich and thorough information for academics to investigate (Nair et al., 2023; Yin, 2018).

This research proceeded by collecting qualitative data from observation of school life, individual interviews of teachers, parents, students, and technician. Observation data collecting of this research ran from February of 2019 to February of 2020. Interview data was collected between February 2019 and February 2022, from the face-to-face interview to the virtual interview due to the international pandemic situation. Each observation was videotaped and transcribed. All interviews were recorded and transcribed in their native tongue (Spanish or Catalan), with translations of English provided. Transcripts were processed in the original language using a qualitative software suite (NVivo).

The interviews with parents focused on the informal space, including family interaction model, family weekend activities. In the formal space, interview focus about general discussions about school, and influences and attitudes of Tandem Project were considered. The interviews with teachers focused on Tandem Project's educational strategy, experience, and feelings. All interviews focused on children's experiences both in and out of school, as well as family factors and their experiences in various school settings. The interview schedules were designed to be as open as possible in order to allow themes to arise from discussions with teachers, Chinese students and parents.

4. Analysis, Results and Discussion

In order to accomplish the investigation objective, which we recall below, we classify (by dimensions and categories) and analyze the data after they have been retrieved from all of the instruments utilized. We identified the barriers of Chinese students in this multicultural school and examined how ABP influences the inclusion and participation processes of Chinese children.

The first category is the barrier between two generations. The outcomes of the first category are presented first. The second category is the positive influence of the Tandem Project on the process of inclusion of Chinese students which includes children's participations, motivation, cooperation skill improvement. The following are the findings of our research in regard to the categories and the objective set.

4.1. In the informal fields: Separation of two generations

Relating to the diverse cultural context in this school, there are different opinions related culture in each home. Chinese parents are trying hard to **protect their own culture**, so they keep supporting the three children to study in the Saturday Chinese language school. During the week, students attended the local school. They speak local language and sing local festival songs in it. They learn European society lesson, and were accustomed to the local culture. Therefore, there is **few common topics at home**. Those parents have only learned words such as numbers, and the name of goods in grocery shops for running their small business.

In our invested group, children's academic achievements are not valued too much by their parents. Therefore, there is less approval at home. Sometimes, even if children can achieve academic goals, they won't since it would cause a separation from their parents. Therefore, some children tend to be **reluctant to achieve academic goals**, which will lead them to have lower expectations because of the family background.

Mother A: She plays games at home, and those toys are a little bit more for playing with toys. Sometimes I ask her what the book is about, but she says it, I can't understand, she can speak Spanish, Catalan, she can speak.

Another significant contrast between Chinese and Spanish educational cultures is that Chinese parents in Spanish public schools do not accept that learning goals may be attained through **play and peer interaction**. This group of Chinese parents continue to believe that reading, assignments are the only way of getting cognition development. The traditional method is used to achieve educational objectives.

Mother B: I went game house recommended by teacher once that day, and saw that she didn't read any books, but the children played there. Reading, she is there to play. I thought she was going there to study, but she just sat there, playing, and came back after playing for two hours.

In students' daily activities, some **separation from social-society behavior** happened. That happened when a supervisor asked one parent what they did after school.

Student Q: Do you watch the local TV channel? Do you watch news of Catalonia? How do you get local news?

M: We don't have TV at home. It is too expensive that we can't afford it. We use the internet and mobile phones, and we watch Korean TV series (with Chinese subtitles). (About the local news) We heard from our WeChat or neighbors.

Families tend to **avoid social activities**, because of their limited self-protection skills.

Mother C: I took my three children on the street one day, and the youngest turned unhappy and reluctantly went together with me. A local passerby came into this situation and said directly to me, 'are you smacking the young boy? I will call the police if you do.'

In front of this threat, this mother, who is a Basic Spanish learner, doesn't have skills to explain the situation and defend herself. Therefore, she refuses to take her children to participate school activities.

Mother D: one weekend I took my children to the park. My son was sitting on the swing, a local boy came by and pushed my son down. I intended to ask the boy's mother this situation and tried to asked them playing the swing in turn. However, the boy refused and the mother said something I did not understand. I guess from her attitude that she refused my suggestion. Since that day on, I tried to take my son away from the children not known locally.

When parents avoid participating in social activities, their children have a greater need to engage in social interaction.

The generation gap heightened tensions, increased conflict, and escalated corporal punishment. On one hand, **Physical discipline**, including smacking or hitting children, is a controversial and widely debated topic. While some families may believe that physical discipline is an effective way to correct behavior, many child development experts and organizations.

4.2. In the formal field: Positive influence of ABP

Tandem Project activities are open and allow the different learning rhythms to be contemplated. The use of images of works of art favors understanding and communication even if you do not have a complete command of the Catalan language.

ABP can be used by parents to help their children's learning and development. Many art projects involve hands-on investigation and experimentation, which can aid in the development of crucial skills such as creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, language, and writing abilities while promoting in-depth learning and bilingualism. Students who participated greatly improved their writing, speaking, and listening abilities. Students of various levels can be involved in the deployment of this instructional technique at the same time. Participating in art projects with their children allows parents to provide support and guidance as their children learn and grow, as well as foster a lifelong love of learning.

Art projects can help parents connect with their children and participate in a shared activity. Therefore, parents can establish a deeper sense of connection with their children by participating in creative projects together.

Teacher A: "Look, the Tandem Project has enhanced the participation of students on this site. I want to emphasize that because of the project, there is a dedicated family moment—an activity that serves as a family-oriented occasion. This occurs when families visit schools and actively engage with their children, receiving explanations about their activities and more. It becomes an opportunity for improvement, providing families with the chance to feel integrated."

Teacher B: We are involved in school life...Most parents will come during festivals. . . Sometimes they call us over, but I don't understand them, so they just say a few words and then leave.

There is a culture challenge in Tandem project that is to involve Chinese family.

Technician: The Chinese family is not coming. That is very important, you think that families, this did not happen with Tandem, but it also happens with another project, other programs, that is, the family comes when it is suggested that they come, from the school with a specific project for them. We are going to come to the museum to do VTS, or we are going to do something else, then they come. But when, for example, when they pass by, you tell them, hey, on Saturday afternoons the museum is free, you can come here to spend the afternoon, there are autonomous activities, you don't need to take anything. First of all, people don't know that it's free, but that's also what they think is true, that it depends on people's cultural background, they don't have experiences of a museum in their culture either. That is, when Chinese families go to museums in China? You know, it's the same. It is a serious problem.

Parents can use art projects to improve understanding and appreciating their children's interests and abilities. This is especially crucial for parents who do not have a background in art or have not been exposed to the types of creative activities that their children like. Parents can obtain a stronger respect for their children's creativity and a deeper understanding of their children's individual talents and abilities by participating in art projects with their children.

This project also improves the **children's participation**.

Mother B: "When he attended this school, he ran very fast; however, when he went to that school, he cried and promptly ran home. TN mentioned that he exhibited a fondness for school, listened attentively to his teacher, and expressed joy about attending this particular school where he ran eagerly to school."

Students need motivation because it promotes their learning and academic performance. Motivated students are more likely to interact with the topic, participate in class, and persevere in the face of difficulties. They are also more likely to create objectives, accept responsibility for their own learning, and seek assistance when necessary. Students who lack motivation, on the other hand, may struggle to stay involved with the content, may not participate in class, and may give up easily when presented with difficulties. Poorer academic achievement, poorer self-esteem, and a negative attitude toward learning can all result from this.

The **collaborative** nature of the arts project contributes to a positive social environment, fostering connectivity and rapport among students. This observation underscores the broader impact of artistic initiatives on the social dynamics within the educational setting.

Student K: "I am not sure if my relationship with my classmates has improved, but there has been an increase in interaction between my classmates and me. In the project, I spoke more words and had more contact with my classmates. The art project involves a substantial amount of verbal expression, primarily focused on language exercises."

From the provided statement, it is discernible that the arts project has contributed to the enhancement of social skills among the students. The increased interaction and verbal expression within the context of the project signify improvements in communication and interpersonal skills. The student's ability to articulate more words and have heightened contact with classmates suggests a positive impact on verbal communication and social engagement. Furthermore, the emphasis on language exercises within the arts project underscores the development of linguistic and communicative competence, essential components of effective social interaction.

5. Conclusion

This investigation focuses on the Chinese students of the multicultural school. Even though it is a small scale, orienting from the similar cultural background of the researcher makes the findings more convincing.

Let's check back the investigation objective: identifying the principal barrier and general benefits of an art project based on Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), based on the interaction between a museum and the school, about how it influences this project in the process of inclusion and participation of Chinese children.

According to our findings, Chinese children of this public school mainly face the barriers as language, economic unfavorable situation, rare social activity and low efficient social relationship. Come from low-income families, their parent either have to work until mid-night, or don't have common topic with their children. This is especially crucial for parents who may feel estranged from their children or have few opportunities to spend quality time with them (Boutakidis et al., 2011; Tseng & Fuligni, 2000).

Self-protection skills, which is defined by Alicke and Sedikides (2009) as, an emergency system that operates the interests when interests are threatened by a possible decline in a self-component below the tolerance point. Those parents are unable to protect or defend for their children in public, preferring to remain inconspicuous in a dispute. All of these behaviors have an impact on the development of Chinese youngsters. The first step in overcoming those barriers of families with immigration background is to assist those parents rather than the youngsters. The Tandem Project combined with the VTS encourages engagement of Chinese parents, which will also promote Chinese-family collaboration. Family cooperation is an extremely important socially inclusive activity. Besides, the Tandem Project has a significant impact on Chinese students' peer interactions. We discovered that those students learn to appreciate and express themselves, as well as to participate in group activities in order to accomplish a project with their efforts. All of these findings imply that the Tandem Project is a worthwhile endeavor. ABP fully stimulates students' learning motivation, greatly improves students' participation in school activities, and enhances cooperative behavior among students, thereby creating an inclusive school environment and reducing student dropout rates, improve their social interactive ability. Children can communicate their thoughts, feelings, and emotions nonverbally through art; it is an excellent medium for self-expression. Children can explore their creativity, freely express themselves, and develop a greater understanding of themselves through art. In the Tandem Project, everybody was valued equally. All the members have the opportunity to develop their interests. Children are motivated in the Tandem Project by their own interests. Self-determination and self-expression were respected (Morón Velasco, 2011). All students can collaborate in one project; no one is alone.

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As a result, inspiring children is critical for their academic progress as well as their overall well-being. It assists individuals in developing a positive attitude toward studying, increasing their confidence, and improving their academic performance.

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