



Creative Futures

Artistic Pedagogies for Sustainable Growth

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Creative Futures: Artistic Pedagogies for Sustainable Growth

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FOREWORD

Creative Futures: Artistic Pedagogies for Sustainable Growth

Rachel Mason

My professional relationship with Anabela Moura goes back a long time. She undertook postgraduate studies in visual arts education at Leicester Polytechnic (1990) and then at Roehampton University in London (1995) when I was teaching there. Her doctoral thesis, titled *Prejudice Reduction in Teaching and Learning Portuguese Cultural Heritage*, was an early indicator of the direction her future career would take. Shortly after she completed it, we joined forces on delivering the first postgraduate program in visual arts education in Portugal. This was the beginning of a close working partnership that continues today. Moura has collaborated with Suparna Banerjee, an independent teacher-researcher trained in Tagore dance and Bharatanatyam, an Indian Classical dance, on editing this book. I have not had the pleasure of meeting her in person. But I was interested to learn she also pursued doctoral studies (Dance Studies) at Roehampton.

Moura and Banerjee's professional practice is informed by critical and cultural theory. Since we first met, Moura has expanded the Arts Education Program at the *Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo* in Portugal to embrace a wide range of arts practices together with cultural heritage management. Banerjee, who speaks of herself belonging to a global community of Bengalis, experiments internationally with third space pedagogy. In her dance performance and teaching, she investigates ways of "recombining culturally different pedagogical practices into new dance forms." Her chapter in the book is a detailed account of how she collaborated with another dance teacher, trained in Western methods, on introducing traditional Bharatanatyam dance steps, movements and gestures into a dance program in America. Moura and Banerjee's publication records are impressive. Moura-founded the refereed journal *Diálogos Com A Arte; Revista De Arte, Cultura e Educação*, which she has co-edited since 2010. Banerjee's publications include chapters in *Digital Echoes: Spaces for Intangible and Performance Based Cultural Heritage* (2018) and *The Routledge Companion of Performance and Technology* (forthcoming), and academic papers in *Research in Dance Education*. Both of them are expert intercultural communicators, albeit in different ways. Moura, who speaks four languages, has participated in and directed numerous international

research projects since 2003. Since leaving her native Bengal (1998), Banerjee has collaborated with dance performers and taught dance in Europe, India, Britain and the USA. Given their shared commitment to challenging established cultural boundaries and fostering international dialogue, I am not surprised they have teamed up this way.

Creative Futures: Artistic Pedagogies for Sustainable Growth brings together arts educators from four continents all of whom engage in innovative pedagogical practice in response to specific educational concerns. The inadequacies they choose to grapple with include: (i) how to respond to the decline in reading; (ii) how to teach digital media in the age of Instagram and AI; (iii) how to react to the increase of violent racist incidents in educational institutions; and (iv) how to re-integrate artisanal intelligence into the teaching of design.

Most chapters report problem-solving educational experiments the authors conducted themselves. In one of these, a dance educator explains how the dance department at her university successfully responded to the unprecedented challenges posed by Covid-19. In another, a theatre director and a dance performer explain the procedures they adopted to address the absence of a native performance culture in theatre. Their chapter is a comprehensive account of how they developed and tested out a new performance methodology based on principles embedded in Cree Indian ritual. Other chapters are directed towards exploring the benefits of embedding arts-based methodologies into general education and of seeking to resolve more holistic educational concerns. One of these begins by offering readers a comprehensive review of theoretical arguments underpinning an arts-based approach to education, then continues with a thorough analysis of methodologies arts educators employ that stimulate creative and critical thinking.

How to combine arts pedagogies with social activism is another recurring theme. One chapter in the book reports on an experimental design workshop at a Brazilian university that achieved its twin aims of (i) incorporating social justice themes into graphic design pedagogy, and (ii) fostering civic awareness in students. The participants in the *Design and Crime Workshop* were charged with investigating and mapping out a wide range of neglected social issues. (In the abstract the author mentions racism, femicide, slave labour and violations of Indigenous rights). Then they were invited to choose on to visualize in the form of a protest poster.

The book is the product of an international group of arts educators trained in dance, visual arts, theatre, literature, music, language, poetry, design, history, and education. The descriptive-reflective accounts of their practice they have written for it make for intriguing reading. Sharing their pedagogical experiments in this way opens possibilities for other arts educators to engage with them and act on pedagogical reform. I think the book is important for three main reasons. First, because the international focus means it promises to stimulate learning beyond geographical boundaries. Second, because the authors (i) employ

Collaboration as a strategy for promoting equity, (ii) act on the Communicative role of the arts and (iii) explicate methodologies for teaching both Creative and Critical thinking skills. (UNESCO¹ understands these 3C's as the core skills and values essential for effective educational reform). Third, I value it most, because it is a celebration of curriculum development. Eliot Eisner² understood this as an expression of artistry, noting that curriculum designers, like artists, must use imagination and creativity to envisage final masterpieces of learning. I agree with him that curriculum development is an artistic endeavour and that arts teachers are ideally placed to develop appropriate and creative responses to the most pressing educational concerns.

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PREFACE

Creative Futures: Artistic Pedagogies for Sustainable Growth

Anabela Moura
Suparna Banerjee

Teaching is not the transference of knowledge, but the creation of possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge.
(Freire, 1996, p. 47)

This volume presents a constellation of academic and pedagogical inquiries grounded in the conviction that education, particularly within the context of higher education, should transcend its role as a mere transmitter of knowledge and become a catalyst for social, cultural, and political transformation. The contributions assembled here represent scholars and practitioners from eighteen countries across continents, engaging with disciplines and methodologies that directly confront pressing educational challenges. The topic includes promoting inclusivity in education, sustaining creativity in the digital age, decolonizing curricula, and empowering students to actively participate in (re)inventing the future.

In the face of global inequalities, systematic injustices, ecological collapse, and enduring colonial legacies, education should critically interrogate its own complicities while simultaneously seeking alternative possibilities. This collection of essays seeks to respond to that imperative by offering bold and interdisciplinary approaches that engage in dialogue with an international community of twenty-three scholars across the fields of arts, culture, and education. These researchers are deeply committed to the transformation of educational practice through ethically grounded and transformative perspectives. The volume is organized around three interrelated thematic axes: *Artistic and Creative Pedagogies*; *Language, Literature, and Communication in Education*; and *Gender, Identity, and Cultural Dimensions in Education*. Each axis contributes to a unique lens for grasping the transformative potential of education, collectively constructing a holistic vision of a more equitable, imaginative, and critically engaged academic world.

Thematic Axis I

Artistic and Creative Pedagogies

The first section explores the role of the arts not merely as curricular content, but as radical pedagogical methodologies that encompass emotional intelligence and cultural dialogue, aimed at challenging and stimulating critical thinking. Across the nine chapters in this axis, artistic education emerges as a space for the promotion of both personal and collective empowerment. The contributions span visual protest and design activism, decolonial dance practices, and adaptations of arts education in school children.

At the outset, Ana Isabel Tudela de Sousa (Portugal), drawing on the work of Lipovetsky and Freire, examines how arts education might respond to what she calls the “era of emptiness,” marked by crisis, consumerism, and disconnection, seeking to restore hope, democracy, and inclusion. In the following chapter, Carlos Almeida (Portugal) highlights the transformative role of creativity and critical thinking in early childhood education, demonstrating how integrated arts curricula can foster citizenship, empathy, and belonging. He also emphasizes the need for ongoing teacher training and the meaningful integration of new technologies.

The chapter by Charmaine Zammit (Malta) highlights the transformative role of art in education, showing how integrating artistic practices enhances creativity, critical thinking, and emotional growth in both students and teachers. By fostering cognitive development, interdisciplinary learning, and inclusive environments, this author contends that art-rich curricula equip learners with essential life competencies and support more meaningful, engaged educational experiences.

In another chapter, Suparna Banerjee (India) and Janice Baker (USA) employ two distinct dance forms, Tap and Bharatanatyam, as a medium to promote interdisciplinary learning and inclusive practice in a North American university setting. By applying Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of intentional hybridity in dance pedagogy, these authors demonstrate that their collaborative teaching enhanced learners’ cultural understanding while creating new performance politics in a globalized world. Drawing on two choreographies, they demonstrate how theory and practice can inform each other.

Jhalak Miller (USA) examines the role online instruction plays in fostering creativity and community in dance education, particularly during the 2020 coronavirus pandemic. Her study showcases the positive impact of technological interventions in dance pedagogy at an American university and provides insights into how imagination and creative resilience can drive societal renewal and shape future pedagogical practices.

In the field of visual communication, Susana Barreto (Portugal) presents the “Design and Crime” workshop, conducted in Brazil, where the classroom is transformed into a site of a living protest. Through participatory and critical design practices, students expose “invisible

crimes” embedded in everyday culture. In the following chapter, Wolfgang Weinlich (Austria) analyzes the impact of digital tools such as Canva and artificial intelligence in aesthetic education, questioning how superficial forms of creativity are shaping students’ artistic engagement.

In the following chapter, Suparna Banerjee (India) and Anabela Moura (Portugal) examine the implementation of problem-based learning and the role of a facilitator in a performing arts course in India. By promoting a learner-centered education, these two authors analyze students’ perceptions of facilitation, valued traits of a facilitator, and the challenges faced during the transition from traditional teaching methods, revealing insights on the impact on learning outcomes.

Finally, the importance of a playful and an open-ended artistic pedagogy in early childhood education is emphasized by Susan Ogier (UK), who argues that artistic expression should remain rooted in process, curiosity, and experimentation, resisting the restrictive effects of standardized curricula.

Rather than treating art as an ornamental or ancillary element, all of these studies position artistic practice as foundational to both cognitive and social development. They investigate how creativity can enhance empathy, promote mental well-being, and strengthen democratic participation, particularly among children, marginalized communities, and groups whose voices have historically been silenced. In this regard, artistic pedagogies are not presented as neutral entities but rather as activist, interdisciplinary, and humanizing practices.

Thematic Axis II

Language, Literature, and Communication in Education

The second thematic axis addresses the evolving role of language, literature, and communication within educational contexts shaped by globalization, linguistic diversity, holistic education, and intercultural exchange. Literature is presented not only as a cultural artifact but also as a linguistic learning tool, a medium for identity exploration, and a bridge between differences.

Rosário Santana and Helena Santana (Portugal) demonstrate how the integration of Sophia de Mello Breyner’s literary work with music and creative writing can foster environmental awareness and ethical imagination through narrative. Ana Saldanha (Portugal) reframes literature as a domain of linguistic inquiry and cognitive development, rather than a decorative or secondary field.

Ruma Saha (India) explores the philosophical underpinnings of Tagore’s dance pedagogy as a vehicle for self-expression, cultural awareness, and inclusion among marginalized students in West Bengal. Her chapter reveals how the teaching of dance has positively impacted learners’

self-esteem, emotions, and confidence, aligning with Rabindranath Tagore's concept of holistic education.

The chapter that follows is by Carla Pires Antunes and Maria Flor Dias (Portugal), in which they show how poetic texts used in teacher education can cultivate imagination, interpretive skills, and linguistic proficiency by fusing literary and dramatic education.

Fliyinfolu Olubunmi Idowu (UK) provides a detailed analysis of Nigerian English and its intelligibility in global contexts. In the broader setting of English as a lingua franca, her chapter challenges dominant native-speaker norms and proposes intelligibility, effective communication, and mutual understanding as more equitable goals.

The contributions in this second axis critically examine dominant linguistic ideologies and explore inclusive models of instruction that recognize linguistic hybridity, cultural context, and learner autonomy. They also investigate the role of literature and performance in expanding students' linguistic and imaginative horizons, rebalancing discourses historically shaped by Anglophone logics. In other words, they advocate for epistemological decolonization in the face of Anglocentrism.

Thematic Axis III

Gender, Identity, and Cultural Dimensions in Education

The final section focuses on the complex intersections of gender, power, and identity in educational settings. Drawing on feminist, postmodern, and post-structuralist theories, contributors interrogate the ways in which educational institutions reinforce gender binaries, normalize heteronormativity, and marginalize non-normative identities, often invisibly and systematically.

In their chapter, Floyd Favel (Canada) & Sabina Sweta Sen-Podstawska (Poland) explore "Native Performance Culture" (NpC) as an indigenous methodology for learning, research, and creativity. Emphasizing the importance of land, storytelling, community, and ancestral ties, these authors argue for indigenization and decolonization in artistic practices, reconfiguring educational frameworks and fostering indigenous knowledge.

From a Foucauldian perspective, Maria Helena Pereira Dias (Brazil), Ana Maria Faccioli de Camargo (Brazil), and Maria Celeste de Moura Andrade (Brazil) analyze how teaching roles in Brazilian schools reflect dynamics of power, cultural scripts, and historical discourses of care (for others, the environment, and ethical and social concerns).

In a separate contribution, Maria Celeste de Moura Andrade (Brazil) deepens this analysis by demonstrating how gender and citizenship are discursively constructed and also resisted within school contexts, often through the "arts of saying and doing" enacted by children and

educators. These constructs are not inherent, natural, or fixed, but are produced and shaped through social practices, language, and the discourses circulating within a given culture. In the concluding chapter, Miriam Zanini (Brazil), Heitor Alvelos (Portugal), and Jorge Brandão Pereira (Portugal), in turn, present the concept of Artisanal Intelligence for embodied education in design schools. These authors question the dominance of digital abstraction, advocating for an anti-instrumentalist approach that values craftsmanship, ethics, and sensory knowledge as forms of resistance and reinvention. Both of these contributions highlight the transformative power of arts-based and embodied education in subverting established norms and fostering pedagogical practices that promote not only knowledge but also social justice, imagination, and the emancipation of marginalized identities and ways of knowing.

Thus, in this volume, education is framed not as a neutral space, but as a site of struggle, negotiation, and the potential for reinvention. Together, the contributions form a compelling mosaic of critical practice and visionary thought. These chapters not only offer critique but also possibility, demonstrating how education can resist reductive systems, challenge hegemonic narratives, and cultivate new forms of knowing and being. In doing so, they speak to an audience of educators, researchers, and institutional leaders committed to justice-oriented, culturally responsive, and futuristic teaching.

At a time when higher education faces demand to commodify learning, accelerate outputs, and prioritize efficiency over depth, this volume argues for something expansive and vital. It calls on academic institutions to embrace their ethical and political responsibilities by supporting inclusive curricula, as well as fostering interdisciplinary creativity and pedagogical innovation.

Grounded in research and shaped by activist pedagogies, *Creative Futures: Artistic Pedagogies for Sustainable Growth* serves both as a scholarly resource and a call to action. Further to this, it invites institutions, educators, and students to cultivate learning spaces that are critically engaged, culturally responsive, and committed to shaping equitable futures across educational landscapes. Together, these contributions illuminate education's potential to foster not only knowledge, but justice, imagination, and liberation. Both as a scholarly intervention and a pedagogical manifesto, this anthology invites institutions of higher education to engage deeply with the ethical imperatives of teaching and learning in our contemporary world.

The eighteen chapters offer a shared resource for those seeking to align educational practice with the principles of equity, sustainability, and collective flourishing. They do not propose one model, but invite reflection, experimentation, and action, anchored in the belief that education is, ultimately, a practice of hope and liberation.

Concluding Reflections

At a time when democracies and freedom of expression face increasing threats and when primary, secondary, and higher education systems are under pressure to accelerate outcomes and prioritize efficiency over critical reflection, this volume advocates for a broader, more essential approach to educational purpose. It calls on academic institutions to embrace their ethical and political responsibilities by promoting inclusive curricula, fostering interdisciplinary creativity, and supporting pedagogical innovation. It also invites ongoing reflection on the impact of culture, which, though often intangible, exerts a powerful influence on educational practices and social imagination.

This work brings together perspectives from diverse global contexts, united by shared commitments that made this volume possible. It stands as a bridge among countries, a projection of new horizons and academic imaginaries enriched by diversity and plurality. It invites us to look toward the future by building on who we are and imagining what we might become, realizing, collectively, the creative potential of our academic communities. It also underscores the ongoing need for critical reflection on public policy and the role of states in funding educational and cultural initiatives, from local and regional governance to national administrations. It urges greater interconnection between academic institutions and the dynamics of civil society and cultural repertoires.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the restoration of democracy in Portugal—an event with profound national, European, and global significance. The country’s democratization was a prerequisite for its entry into the European Economic Community in 1986. The historical significance of this moment continues to reverberate in educational and cultural policy debates, reminding us of the foundational role that democratic values play in shaping inclusive educational futures.

This anthology represents a historical turning point with both regional and global impacts. It is shaped by the online participation of educators, artists, and cultural practitioners from almost every continent and contributes to a shared pedagogical space that responds to global challenges by decolonizing perspectives and ushering in new pedagogical methodologies.

We anticipate that this work will be received as a space for pedagogical resistance and a renewed global consciousness of education’s transformative role. Additionally, we hope that it will act as a platform for sharing practices through networks that bring diverse voices and universal challenges into conversation. We are also hopeful that this volume will inspire local actions informed by global experiences and a more humane, critical, and creative education capable of confronting problems that transcend borders.

Thematic Axis I
**Artistic and
Creative
Pedagogies**

How Can Arts Education Dwell in the *Era of Emptiness*? Some Hopes for Utopian Didactics

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Abstract

Drawing on Gilles Lipovetsky's era of emptiness and Zygmunt Bauman's liquid modernity, this chapter examines the role of arts education amid fragmentation and the erosion of shared spaces. Anchored in the pioneering thought of Portuguese educator and writer Irene Lisboa, it traces a pedagogical pathway that connects past and present: from the historical perspectives of McFee, Berger, and Rocha de Sousa to contemporary contributions by Eça and Saldanha, Nóvoa, Christopoulou, and Iavelberg. It argues that the arts constitute one of the distinctive modes of knowing and interpreting the world, crucial for reimagining democratic practices. Three pedagogical "seeds" or "hopes" — conviviality, capillarity, and agency — are proposed as gestures to foster encounter, social interconnection, and teacher empowerment. By weaving past insights with present voices, the chapter frames arts education as both poetic and political praxis: a way of dwelling otherwise in the midst of the void.

Keywords

Arts Education; Democratic Pedagogy; Didactics; Pedagogy; Teacher Agency; Visual Culture

Dwelling in the Era of Emptiness: A Diagnosis

In *L'ère du vide: Essais sur l'individualisme contemporain* (1983), Gilles Lipovetsky (1944-) identifies a subtle yet profound shift in Western modernity: from the heroic age of ideology to an age of lightness, irony, and emotional detachment. The *era of emptiness* is not marked by tragedy but by indifference, not by repression but by dispersion. Lipovetsky's diagnosis captures the paradox of a culture in which individuals are both liberated and adrift, emancipated from collective duties yet deprived of existential anchorage. The modern

subject is freed from meaning, wandering through endless choices and pleasures that fail to form a coherent life narrative. This condition, which Lipovetsky calls *hypermodernity*, is characterised by the vertiginous acceleration of experiences and the ever-growing cult of the self. Consumerism and hedonism no longer appear as deviations but as the core of everyday existence. The promise of freedom has become inseparable from the fatigue of choice and the pursuit of happiness often conceals a quiet despair. In this context, individuals are no longer oppressed by external constraints but are burdened by the obligation to continuously invent meaning and to perform authenticity as a social norm, which has become a generalised and exhausting imperative.

In *Liquid Modernity* (2000), Zygmunt Bauman (1925-2017) develops a complementary perspective. He argues that contemporary society has dissolved the stable frameworks that once organised human life (family, community, work, belief), replacing them with fluid, provisional, and revocable bonds. The *liquidity* of modern life implies constant adaptation to change and an erosion of durable commitments. Relationships, values, and identities have become commodities circulating in a market of instant gratification. The *liquid* subject must keep moving, for immobility threatens obsolescence. What Lipovetsky names *emptiness* thus corresponds to Bauman's vision of a world where nothing is meant to last and where the anxiety of impermanence has become the defining mood of existence.

In both thinkers, the core concern is not material deprivation but existential disorientation. The individual enjoys unprecedented access to goods, technologies, and freedoms, yet suffers from a deficit of purpose and belonging. The abundance of possibilities generates a paradoxical poverty of meaning, while the proliferation of images, messages, and connections conceals an ever-deepening solitude. As Bauman (2003, p. 62) observes, "the advent of virtual proximity renders human connections simultaneously more frequent and more shallow, more intense and more brief"; we have never communicated so much, and yet we have never been so alone.

Byung-Chul Han (1959-) advances this argument in *The burnout society* (2015[2010]) portraying a civilisation of fatigue where the imperative of self-optimisation replaces external domination. Han (2015, p. 8) contrasts the *disciplinary society* of the past with today's *achievement society*, in which individuals internalise the demand to be endlessly productive, visible and positive. The violence of the present is no longer coercive but neuronal: the pressure to perform one's potential leads to exhaustion, depression, and burnout. This pathology of "freedom" mirrors Lipovetsky's *emptiness*: an existential hollowness masked by the hyperactivity of doing, posting, and consuming [Figure 1]. It echoes Baudrillard's (1993)

hell of the Same, later revisited by Han (2020), to describe a world of homogenisation and identity loss.



Fig. 1 Kamil Kotarba, [Untitled], from the series *Hide and Seek* (2015).
Photograph. © Kamil Kotarba. Reproduced from <https://kamilkotarba.com/hide-and-seek>

In his work *Resonance: Sociology of our relationship to the world* (2019), Hartmut Rosa (1965-) offers a way to reframe this diagnosis. For Rosa, the crisis of modernity is not only social or economic but *relational*. Modern acceleration (the imperative to move faster, accumulate more, and respond instantly) erodes the human capacity for *Resonanz* (Rosa's term in the original German), the experience of being "touched" by the world and responding to it meaningfully. When the world becomes a mere object of control, it falls silent. *Resonanz*, by contrast, denotes a mode of existence grounded in reciprocity, in which subjects and worlds co-vibrate. The erosion of *Resonanz* parallels Lipovetsky's *emptiness*: both diagnose, and implicitly denounce, a civilisation whose rhythm of life is too fast to allow for deep listening or poetic attentiveness.

In close temporal proximity to Lipovetsky's (1983) diagnosis of *emptiness*, and well before the later reflections of Bauman (2000, 2003) and Han (2015 [2010]), Maxine Greene (1917-2015) articulated a vision of education that placed the making of meaning at its centre, as a response to these emerging forms of alienation. Writing from the 1970s onwards, Greene anticipated the existential and affective disorientation of late modernity and proposed an educational ideology grounded in imagination, encounter, and the creation of a shared world.

In her article “Public education and the public space” (1982, p. 8), she writes: “I cannot imagine a coherent sense of purpose in education if *something common* does not arise in a *public space*.” As António Sampaio da Nóvoa (2022, p. 45) later observed, this is “an extraordinary formula for bringing together the common and the public, explaining that education depends on a relationship with others, especially with those who are different”, a stance that contrasts sharply with the homogenising tendencies exposed by Baudrillard (1993) and Han (2020).

Against the atomisation of the *hypermodern self* described by Lipovetsky (1983) and Bauman (2000, 2003), Greene (1995) imagined a pedagogy of *wide awareness*. Her notion of *public space* echoes Rosa’s call for *Resonanz*, as both demand slowness, reciprocity, and openness as prerequisites for meaning. And, like Han (2015[2010]), Greene warns against the isolation of the self that reinvents itself: for her, genuine freedom is never a private performance but the shared act of bringing something new into the world in the company of others.

In close affinity, Gloria Jean Watkins (1952-2021), better known by her pen name bell hooks, conceives education as a practice of freedom, an act of love and resistance within a culture of exhaustion. In *Teaching to transgress* (1994), bell hooks writes that “the classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy” (p. 12), urging teachers and students to transform learning into a communal pursuit of wholeness. Where Bauman’s (2000) *liquid modernity* dissolves durable bonds and Han’s (2015[2010]) *achievement society* imposes endless self-optimization, hooks (1994) envisions pedagogy as a counter-movement of care. Her call for dialogue, vulnerability, and embodied presence defies the instrumental rationality of neoliberal culture. Education, in this view, becomes a slow and attentive practice that reclaims meaning through connection, a resonant form of coexistence that resists the noise of acceleration.

Seen through this constellation of thinkers (Lipovetsky, 1983; Bauman, 2000, 2003; Han, 2015[2010]; Rosa, 2019; Greene, 1995; hooks, 1994), the *era of emptiness* appears not simply a crisis but a condition that calls for reimagining forms of human relation and education. It is within this social and cultural landscape that arts education acquires renewed urgency. If the world has become *liquid*, the arts can offer texture; if life has become *empty*, the arts can restore meaning; if voices have grown silent, the arts reawaken *resonance*. Arts education, in this sense, is not a luxury but a practice of resistance: a slow pedagogy in a fast and *Mad World* (Orzabal, on *Tears for Fears: The Hurting*, 1982), a communal act in an age of isolation and a poetic counterpoint to the instrumental rationality that dominates contemporary existence.

Walking, Seeing, Drawing... and Meaningful Learning

Long before the vocabulary of *meaningful learning* (Ausubel, 1968) or culturally responsive pedagogy entered educational discourse, Portuguese educator and writer Irene Lisboa (1892-1958) articulated a vision of education rooted in the everyday worlds of children.

Writing in 1926, she advocated for pedagogical practices that emerged from lived experience rather than abstract programs. Streets, squares, and fields were not peripheral to learning; they were places of learning, where observation, movement, and discovery intertwined. For Lisboa, schools should not merely transmit culture; they should learn from the outside world, allowing the textures of daily life to shape educational processes.

Central to her pedagogy was the act of drawing. As Ana Tudela de Sousa (2025) highlights, Lisboa observed that “one learns more by drawing than by palavering” (2015[1926], p. 166). Drawing, for her, was not a decorative afterthought but a mode of knowing, a way for children to interpret, organize, and reflect upon their experiences. After walking through their surroundings, they would return to the classroom to draw what they had encountered. In this process, experience became inscription, and the world was not only observed but reconstructed through visual and artistic practices. This anticipates later insights by theorists of *experiential education* (Dewey, 1938), *active pedagogy* (Freinet, 1946), and *meaningful learning* (Ausubel, 1968), situating her as a conceptual precursor to many twentieth-century educational debates.

Irene Lisboa’s attention to children’s lived worlds, her conviction that schools must learn from the outside world, and her belief in teachers as imaginative mediators provide the soil from which new democratic practices can grow. Therefore, Lisboa should not be read as a historical curiosity but as a living interlocutor for today’s education professionals within the school and social ecosystem, one whose insights resonate with the urges of the liquid, hypermodern age. Irene Lisboa’s pedagogical perspective on everyday observation and the epistemic value of drawing also anticipated key insights that would only be formalized decades later in visual culture studies and arts education, highlighting how children learn by walking through and observing their environments.

In the early 1960s, June McFee (1917-2008) articulated a framework that foregrounded cultural context as central to visual learning. In *Preparation for art* (1961), she wrote: “A small child walking down a city street learns visually about his culture” (McFee cit. Chalmers, 2005, p. 6). This deceptively simple statement encapsulates a crucial pedagogical principle: visual experience is not passive reception but active cultural engagement. McFee argued that arts education should recognize how learners absorb and interpret visual culture through their daily encounters long before they enrolled in formal visual arts classes. She positioned arts education as a bridge between cultural environments and one’s perception, expanding its scope beyond technique to include the development of contextual awareness (McFee & Degge, 1977).

A decade later, John Berger’s seminal work *Ways of seeing* (1972) expanded these concerns into the critical domain. Berger famously argued that “the way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe” (p. 8). By revealing how vision is shaped by cultural,

historical, and ideological frameworks, Berger displaced the notion of seeing as neutral. He showed that perception is structured by systems of power, representation, and knowledge. This insight opened pathways for educational practices that cultivate critical seeing, practices that teach students not merely to look, but to interrogate how and why they see what they see. In this sense, Berger's work provides the theoretical scaffolding for understanding the act of drawing, observing, or representing as simultaneously cognitive, cultural, and political.

In the Portuguese context, these international debates arrived with delay, shaped by the constraints of a dictatorial regime that restricted access to new pedagogical currents. Within this environment, Rocha de Sousa (1980) offered a conceptual and practical bridge. He distinguished between *olhar* (looking) and *ver* (seeing), emphasizing that *looking* refers to the sensory and perceptual registration of the world, whereas *seeing* involves conscious coordination, interpretation, and judgement, an active process shaped by memory, culture, and critical awareness. For Rocha de Sousa, *seeing* meant to judge and comprehend the world, and he advocated for teaching practices that would develop this capacity in students. His work, aimed directly at teachers, translated critical visual theory into pedagogical language, offering tools for cultivating emancipatory forms of visual literacy in schools. In doing so, he positioned the act of *seeing* not as a neutral skill but as a site of agency and resistance, particularly significant in a context where critical interpretation was itself politically charged.

This intertwining of movement, perception, and artistic inscription finds further contemporary echoes in Teresa Eça and Ângela Saldanha's (2022) essay "Reaprender a caminhar" (Relearning to walk). Their work proposes walking as pedagogy, a practice that rejects pre-defined educational routes and instead embraces deambulation and errancy as formative acts. For Eça and Saldanha, walking is both method and metaphor: it allows learners to inhabit the world attentively and construct knowledge through embodied, relational encounters with place. In this way, their walking pedagogies extend Lisboa's (2015[1926]) and McFee's (1961) attention to lived experience, deepen Berger's (1972) critical seeing, and operationalize Rocha de Sousa's (1980) interpretative vision within contemporary educational contexts.

Considered as a whole, these perspectives offer a compelling vision of arts education as a way of engaging with, interpreting, and constructing the world. In Irene Lisboa (1915 [1926]), the act of drawing after walking functions as more than expression; it is a form of inquiry, a way for children to transform lived encounters into visual understanding and cultural interpretation. McFee (1961) highlights the cultural dimension of this process, showing how visual experience shapes how individuals learn about their world. Berger (1972) exposes the critical frameworks that mediate seeing, revealing how vision is always situated within social and historical contexts. In a later Portuguese context, Rocha de Sousa (1980) extends these ideas by defending *seeing* (as judging and comprehending the world) as a pedagogical practice

to be cultivated in schools, linking critical vision to teachers' emancipatory roles. Eça and Saldanha (2022) carry this pathway into the present through walking pedagogies, emphasising embodied, non-linear encounters with place.

Taken together, these contributions articulate arts education as situated knowledge-in-action. Rather than separating thinking from doing, or school from the world, they propose a porous, embodied, and artistic pedagogy, in which movement, perception, and making become intertwined acts of interpretation and world-construction.

How Can Arts Education Dwell in the *Era of Emptiness*?

The contemporary educational landscape is shaped by paradoxes that destabilise traditional pedagogical frameworks. On one hand, we inhabit what Lipovetsky (1983) called the *era of emptiness*: a cultural condition marked by individualism, accelerated consumption, and a pervasive sense of disconnection. Educational institutions often mirror the logic of hypermodernity, privileging measurable outcomes, efficiency, and performative gestures over meaningful encounters. On the other hand, as Bauman (2000) observed, we live in a *liquid modernity*, characterized by flux, instability, and the erosion of stable reference points. Education, like other social structures, is caught in these currents, struggling to offer spaces of anchoring and shared meaning.

Within this tension, arts education occupies a fragile yet potentially transformative position. Historically marginalised as ancillary or decorative, the arts have often been reduced to tools for improving other subjects. More recently, they have been enlisted to promote “creativity”, a term itself hollowed out by overuse and instrumentalised within political and economic agendas that prioritise innovation, competitiveness, and measurable outcomes. Yet, as contemporary art education scholars have argued, their significance lies elsewhere: in their capacity to cultivate spaces of relation, interpretation, and world-making. In times when social bonds dissolve and cultural narratives thin out, the arts can offer what Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) called a *space of appearance* (1958) where individuals encounter one another through shared acts and gestures. Maxine Greene (1982) likewise envisioned education as a vital public space “where human beings, speaking and acting in their plurality, can appear before one another and realize the power they have simply in being together” (p. 6).

When understood not as ornament but as a core democratic and epistemic *praxis*, arts education can reintroduce thickness and depth into educational life. It can respond to the *emptiness* diagnosed by Lipovetsky (1983) and navigate the *liquidity* analysed by Bauman (2000, 2003) by anchoring learning in lived, shared, and imaginative experiences. Central to this reconfiguration is the notion of *care*. In arts education, caring extends far beyond interpersonal relations, encompassing the ways we attend to our own abstractions, conceptual frameworks, and pedagogical habits. As Atkinson (2022) argues, *caring* involves a

critical vigilance toward inherited pedagogical structures, sociocultural codes, and modes of subjectivation. Such vigilance can lead to a decolonisation of thought and practice, unsettling the securities offered by tradition and dominant narratives. Rather than merely including differences within pre-existing frameworks, *care* opens possibilities for redrawing the cartographies of artistic and pedagogical spaces, enabling new abstractions, subjectivities, and collective practices to emerge. For Atkinson, these processes are inseparable from the *interstices* (the spaces in between dominant structures) where new pedagogical and artistic possibilities can take shape. In arts education, attending to these *interstitial spaces* means responding to difference, divergence and the singular potential of each learner and each encounter. It also means approaching the classroom or studio *as a stranger* as Greene (1973) suggested, suspending preconceived expectations and remaining open to the unfamiliar, the unexpected and the not-yet-known. This stance aligns with Rosa's (2019) call for *resonant* relations with the world, inviting educators to cultivate pedagogical dispositions that welcome uncertainty, doubt, and the affective intensities of artistic encounters.

In this sense, artistic practice becomes a site of intentional *disobedience* (Atkinson, 2018), where learners' unexpected gestures, materials, and ideas challenge established parameters and give rise to speculative pedagogies. These pedagogies are concerned not with control or adaptation but rather to cultivate sensitivity to *emergent events* and their transformative potential. *Caring* for the *interstices* of artistic practice entails nurturing spaces where differences are not assimilated but generative, where pedagogy is reconfigured through attention and invention. In doing so, arts education is reframed as a relational, ethically attuned practice, one that does not merely transmit cultural forms but continually reimagines them through encounters with others and the *unknown*. This reframing urges educators to inhabit pedagogical spaces critically and responsively, laying the ground for democratic approaches.

Contemporary Voices: Towards Democratic Pedagogical Practices

At this point, we turn to several educators who were invited to reflect on and take a stance regarding the place of the arts in education. Their shared perspective finds renewed resonance in the voices gathered by Ana Tudela de Sousa (2022) through three interviews with António Sampaio da Nóvoa (pp. 43-50), Martha Christopoulou (pp. 51-54), and Rosa lavelberg (pp. 55-59). Each interlocutor, from different cultural and disciplinary contexts, contributes to reimagining democratic practices in arts education for our time.

António Sampaio da Nóvoa offers a systemic and historical lens. He reminds us that education is made in the city, within networks of institutions, associations, museums, communities, and intergenerational relations. His reflections echo Lisboa's call for schools to "learn from the

outside” and align with the idea of capillarity, in which learning circulates through the social fabric, connecting formal and informal spaces of creation. Nóvoa’s emphasis on the educational ecosystem challenges schools to reclaim their civic mission by engaging actively with their environments and fostering relations that sustain democratic life beyond classroom walls.

Martha Christopoulou brings a critical and political lens to visual culture in education, drawing on her work in Greece with participatory art, intergenerational practices, and visual literacy. Her approach foregrounds the role of teachers and students as active interpreters and political subjects within a dense landscape of images. Christopoulou argues that arts education must equip learners to question dominant visual narratives, recognise how images shape perceptions and power relations, and adopt positioned, critical stances toward the visual world. Her perspective resonates with Berger’s (1972) insistence that seeing is not a neutral act but shaped by ideological frameworks, and with Rocha de Sousa’s (1980) call to cultivate seeing as judgement and comprehension. At the same time, by rooting these critical practices in collaborative, participatory artistic processes, she builds spaces where visual literacy becomes civic literacy, enabling collective agency and democratic imagination, echoing UNESCO’s call to *reimagine our futures together* (UNESCO, 2021).

Rosa Lavelberg, speaking from the Brazilian context, frames arts education as both cultural practice and civic engagement. She argues that artistic experiences in schools should not be confined to isolated curricular moments but should be interwoven with the cultural textures of students’ lives, enabling them to recognise themselves as cultural agents and interlocutors. This approach resonates with Lisboa’s (2015 [1926]) defence of everyday life as a pedagogical space and with McFee’s (1961) insistence on the cultural basis of visual learning. By embedding artistic practices within lived cultural frameworks, Lavelberg proposes a vision of education that is participatory, situated, and democratically oriented.

Sowing the Seeds: Some Hopes for Utopian Practices

In the context of Lipovetsky’s *emptiness* and Bauman’s *liquidity*, Lisboa’s pedagogy offers a radical anchor: she reminds us that learning is meaningful when it emerges from life itself, not in abstraction from it. Her work bridges the arts, everyday life, and democratic formation, showing that schools can be sites of cultural invention rather than mere transmission. She anticipated, decades in advance, many of today’s debates on contextual, participatory, and culturally responsive education, and did so with a poetic sensibility that renders her thought strikingly contemporary. The contemporary perspectives of Nóvoa, Christopoulou, and Lavelberg echo and renew this vision, revealing the arts as fertile ground for democratic pedagogies. From these resonances emerge three *pedagogical seeds* that invite educators to cultivate practices of dwelling, relation, and imagination.

First Seed: Conviviality

Maxine Greene (1982) reminds us that something shared must happen in a public space where diverse human beings can appear before one another. This vision of education as a public encounter — *as being-with* — constitutes the first condition for democratic dwelling. In an age marked by fragmentation and hyper-individualism, conviviality restores the possibility of shared attention and presence in the company of others.

Arts education, according to a contemporary constructivist and critical approach, can incorporate this principle. Through collective creation (a rehearsal, a mural, a choreography, a soundscape) artistic practices reweave the social fabric that hypermodernity has frayed. Conviviality is not mere coexistence but co-imagination: the shared act of constructing meaning in public space. It presupposes the courage to see and be seen, to be affected and to affect in return. As Maxine Greene (1995) would put it, the arts cultivate *wide-awakeness*: an imaginative alertness that resists both cynicism and apathy and nurtures empathy:

Imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible. It is what enables us to cross empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called “other” over the years. If those others are willing to give us clues, we can look in some manner through strangers’ eyes and hear through their ears. That is because, of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities (Greene, 1995, p. 3).

To teach the visual arts, then, is to create situations of encounter, spaces where the other is not an obstacle but a horizon. This aligns with Christopoulou’s call for critical and participatory visual literacy, with Ivalberg’s culturally situated pedagogy, and with Nóvoa’s vision of education woven into the civic fabric. In Hannah Arendt’s (1958) terms, it is to cultivate the *space of appearance*, the fragile yet shining world that exists only when people act together.

Second Seed: Capillarity

António Sampaio da Nóvoa (2022) reminds us that education “is made in the city,” in the interwoven networks of institutions, associations, museums, and intergenerational exchanges that compose the educational fabric. To dwell pedagogically, therefore, is also to extend—to understand learning as a capillary process that flows through the social body, connecting formal and informal spaces of creation.

In the age of *emptiness*, when life is increasingly compartmentalized (digitally, generationally, ideologically), education must become porous again. Arts education is uniquely positioned to enact this porosity: by circulating between schools and communities, between young and old, between classrooms and streets. Participatory theatre, community murals, sound walks,

walking pedagogies, and critical visual inquiry all exemplify this movement across boundaries, enacting a pedagogy of connection that resonates with Eça and Saldanha's (2022) work.

Capillarity redefines the teacher not as a transmitter of content but as a mediator of relations; not as one who holds knowledge but as one who curates encounters. To educate in the arts is to trace delicate lines of resonance between disparate worlds, to make visible the interdependence that sustains human life. In this sense, arts education becomes a micro-politics of belonging, patiently weaving social tissues where solidarity can once again breathe.

Third Seed: Agency

Nearly a century ago, Portuguese educator and writer Irene Lisboa (2015[1926]) described the teacher who “will bend the rules, reject the official schedule and program, shed authority when it feels cumbersome, and squeeze the didactics until finding their vital juice” (p.161). Her words, at once rebellious and tender, remind us that every transformation in education depends on a gesture of will, on the teacher's decision to preserve the living sap of teaching.

Ana Tudela de Sousa (2025) reads Lisboa not as a historical curiosity but as a living interlocutor for today's education professionals within the school and social ecosystem, one whose insights resonate with the urges of the liquid, hypermodern age, reminding us that transformation is always possible “if the teacher so desires” (Lisboa, 2015[1926], p.161).

Ultimately, these gestures rest on teacher agency: the capacity to make wise, contextually grounded educational judgments and to act upon them (Biesta, 2015). Such agency is not merely a matter of individual will but an emergent quality shaped by professional, cultural, and institutional conditions (Priestley, Biesta & Robinson, 2015). To dwell pedagogically is, therefore, also to choose: life over bureaucracy, presence over procedure, curiosity over conformity. The teacher who “so desires” remains committed to the transformative, democratic potential of artistic and educational encounters, even within systems that discourage imagination. In bell hooks's (1994) and Greene's (1995) terms, this desire is a political act, a refusal of cynicism and an enactment of shared possibility.

Dwelling Otherwise: Arts, Agency, and Democratic Education

To reflect on arts education in the *era of emptiness* (Lipovetsky, 1983) and *liquid modernity* (Bauman, 2000, 2003) is to dwell in the gap between dispersion and the longing for meaning. While hypermodernity fragments attention and erodes shared spaces, educators, artists, and communities persist in cultivating places where seeing expands and deepens, and imagining *comes into being* (Arendt, 1958).

Across this chapter, we have traced a pedagogical pathway spanning a century. Irene Lisboa emerges as a living interlocutor whose *praxis* anticipated current debates: the pedagogical

value of everyday experience and the streets as living educational material, artistic practice as inquiry, attention to children's lived worlds, and the conviction that schools must learn from their surroundings. Her insights echo through McFee's cultural framing, Berger's critical seeing, Rocha de Sousa's visual pedagogy, and Eça and Saldanha's walking practices, converging in the idea of the arts as one of the distinctive modes of knowing and interpreting the world.

Contemporary perspectives from Eça and Saldanha, Nóvoa, Christopoulou, and Iavelberg show how these insights can be reimagined for our present moment: through systemic engagement with the civic fabric, critically positioning within visual culture, and culturally situated practices. These voices affirm that arts education is central to cultivating democratic, critical, and relational forms of life.

The three "seeds" or "hopes" — conviviality, capillarity, and agency — are not prescriptive methods but invitations: to create spaces of encounter, weave learning through the social fabric, and nurturing the agency of those who teach. In these gestures, the arts and education intertwine as poetic and political *praxis*, capable of resisting the flattening forces of our time.

To dwell pedagogically in the *age of emptiness* is, perhaps, one of the most radical gestures available to educators today. It requires slowing down (Basílio, 2025; Eça, 2025; Sousa, 2025), attending, and reimagining the spaces we inhabit together. It also entails a critical stance towards dominant logics of efficiency and standardisation (Charréu, 2025; Dias, 2025), opening room for alternative ways of knowing. It demands that schools become places not merely of transmission, but of shared visual inquiry, and collective world-making. In this slow, attentive dwelling, the arts offer both *praxis* and *horizon: praxis*, because they teach us to see, interpret, and act together; *horizon*, because they keep open the possibility of imagining otherwise.

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Art Education: Pathways to Creativity, Critical Thinking, and Inclusion

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Abstract

Art education represents an essential pillar for the holistic development of children, stimulating creativity, critical thinking and inclusion from early childhood. Through the use of artistic practices, students have the opportunity to express emotions, shape their identity and acquire relevant skills for active participation in society. The teaching of art promotes psychological balance, reinforces self-esteem and, in vulnerable contexts, assumes a fundamental therapeutic role. Within the school setting, art education, integrated across the curriculum and supported by active methodologies, enhances creativity and problem-solving, whilst promoting citizenship, respect for diversity and a sense of belonging. This chapter explores practical examples of the integration of art within the school, demonstrating its impact in transforming educational settings and the promoting inclusion. Despite challenges related to the scarcity of resources and the undervaluation of the artistic field, continuous professional development for teachers and the use of digital technologies constitutes strategic opportunities to guarantee universal access to art. To invest in art education is to foster a more creative, critical and inclusive school, where each child can be the protagonist of their own educational journey.

Keywords

Art Education; Creativity; Critical Thinking; Inclusion; Active Methodologies

Introduction

Art education occupies an essential role in the holistic development of children, serving as a key avenue for the stimulation of creativity, critical thinking and inclusion from the early school years. Through artistic practice, children have the opportunity to express emotions,

build identity and develop fundamental skills for life in society, which go beyond traditional academic abilities. Art functions as a bridge between the students' inner world and the external context, promoting psychological balance, self-esteem and, in situations of vulnerability, also assuming a therapeutic role.

Socially, art fosters values such as empathy, respect for diversity and a sense of belonging, standing out as a universal language that brings together different cultures, social backgrounds and abilities. In the school setting, art education must be transversal and integrated, supported by active methodologies that place the student at the centre of the learning process. Interdisciplinary projects and practical activities enhance creativity and the capacity for problem-solving, preparing students for the challenges of the contemporary world and promoting active citizenship.

This chapter presents a set of concrete experiences and practical examples of how art integrated into the school curriculum can transform the educational environment, contributing to the inclusion and overall development of children. In light of the challenges faced, such as limited resources and the undervaluation of the artistic subjects, the importance of continuous professional development of educators and the integration of new technologies emerge as strategic opportunities to ensure universal access to art. To invest in art education is, therefore, to invest in a more creative, critical and inclusive school, where each child can be the protagonist of their own educational journey and contribute to the construction of a more just and pluralistic society.

Importance of artistic education in child development

As stated previously, artistic education plays a fundamental role in the holistic development of children by stimulating creativity and critical thinking from the early years. Through artistic activities, children learn to explore the world, to question, to imagine and to propose innovative solutions to the challenges they face, contributing to the formation of individuals who are better prepared for the complexity of contemporary society. This recognition is widely substantiated in pedagogical literature, as well as in Portugal's education regulatory documents, highlighting the transversal impact of art education on cognitive, emotional, social and motor development, consolidating it as indispensable in the formation of creative, critical and socially sensitive individuals.

In the cognitive domain, participation in artistic practices favours essential skills, such as attention, perception, memory and problem-solving ability. Magsamen & Ross (2023) underline that art stimulates divergent thinking and creativity, crucial skills for academic success and innovation when faced with complex problems. The integration of playful and concrete approaches also facilitates the learning of concepts in other areas of knowledge, such as mathematics and the sciences (Gardner, 1983).

From an emotional and identity-building perspective, artistic practice creates a safe space for the expression of emotions and inner experiences, promoting self-awareness and self-esteem. According to Gombrich (2000), the act of creating helps children understand their emotions, develop empathy and build a positive self-image. This aspect is especially relevant in vulnerable contexts, where art can serve as a mechanism for resilience and emotional autonomy (Malchiodi, 2005).

In the social dimension of artistic education, the promotion of socialisation, respect for diversity and co-operation is highlighted. Art, as a universal language, favours social inclusion by allowing children from different cultural backgrounds and with diverse abilities to share experiences and values (Eisner, 2002). These shared experiences strengthen the sense of belonging and promote attitudes of tolerance and solidarity, which are essential for a democratic society.

The motor component of child development also benefits from artistic practice, as the use of materials such as brushes, pencils, clay or musical instruments enhances fine motor skills and co-ordination, with positive effects on other areas of learning processes and in daily life (Catterall, 2009). In this way, active participation in and through the arts has a positive impact on mental health and well-being, helping to manage stress, anxiety and other emotional challenges. In school settings, art functions as a resource to promote psychological balance and emotional resilience and to strengthen affective bonds and socialisation (Malchiodi, 2005). These facts highlight an essential component for the overall development of children, reinforcing the need for educational policies that value and integrate art into the curriculum. To ensure its transformative potential, it is crucial to invest in continuous teacher training, in the adequate provision of resources and in the recognition of this subject within the school context.

Functions of Artistic Practice

Artistic practice plays a fundamental and multifaceted role in children's development, going far beyond the mere mastery of techniques or aesthetic appreciation. It serves as a privileged space for personal expression and construction of identity, as well as for the development of essential socio-emotional, cognitive and social skills that contribute to their holistic growth. Through various artistic components, such as visual arts, music, theatre and performance, the children find legitimate and safe ways to express their inner world, explore ideas, and communicate experiences, even those that go beyond verbal language.

From a socio-emotional perspective, artistic practice acts as a powerful emotional mediator, offering alternatives for the expression and regulation of feelings that are often difficult to verbalise or understand. Eisner (2002) emphasizes that the arts transcend the limitations of conventional language, creating spaces where emotions can be represented and processed

through visual, auditory or bodily forms. This process not only allows children to express themselves authentically, but also contributes to the development of self-awareness and emotional self-regulation, both of which are essential for psychological balance. Malchiodi (2005), a specialist in expressive therapies, reinforces this idea by highlighting artistic creation as an effective therapeutic resource for the management of stress, anxiety and other emotional challenges, promoting resilience, especially in contexts of social vulnerability. Complementing this, art therapy, as described by Coutinho (2013), demonstrates specific benefits in children's communication, autonomy and socialisation of children, especially for those in adverse situations, such as social exclusion or academic failure. Through artistic creation, children develop non-verbal means to express difficult experiences, which contributes to their inclusion and emotional well-being.

In the process of identity formation, artistic practice also plays a decisive role. By experimenting with different forms and languages, children explore diverse values, roles and cultural references, expanding their experiential and symbolic horizons. Studies by Catterall (2009) highlight that engaging in group artistic activities fosters a sense of belonging and reinforces the acceptance of diversity. Sharing the creative process and the final product stimulates mutual respect and the valorisation of differences, helping to create more inclusive and democratic school environments. This social dimension of art, therefore, nurtures crucial skills for coexistence and co-operation, preparing children to actively participate in a pluralistic and compassionate society.

In the cognitive field, artistic practice stimulates a complex set of mental processes that involve planning, experimentation, problem-solving, decision-making and reflective evaluation. Eisner (2002) stresses that the creative act promotes divergent thinking, encouraging the ability to find multiple solutions to a single problem, an essential skill for innovation and adaptation in the face of contemporary challenges. Following this line of thought, Magsamen & Ross (2023) add that the expansion of creative capacities and critical thinking, fostered by artistic education, are fundamental for academic success and for the formation of individuals capable of innovating and solving complex problems. Moreover, art allows for the integration of knowledge and skills from various areas, consolidating learning in a significant and contextualised way. Even early participation in artistic projects also develops skills that are indispensable for teamwork and respect for others. Collaboration in creative processes stimulates interpersonal communication, negotiation and collective commitment, strengthening the social skills necessary in an interdependent society. As Catterall (2009) points out, the spirit of innovation, nurtured by artistic practices, is closely tied to co-operation and social responsibility, forming a foundation for active and inclusive citizenship.

In this way, artistic practice has proven impact on promoting children's psychological well-being, encouraging creativity and providing moments of satisfaction, relaxation and achievements, thereby reducing emotional stress. Malchiodi (2005) emphasizes that its integration in school contexts can be a valuable strategy to support students at risk, helping to build emotional resilience and strengthen affective and social bonds within the educational community. Artistic practice plays an integral and indispensable educational role. It associates technical and aesthetic development with a profound commitment to the emotional, social and cognitive growth of children. Its value transcends art as an area of knowledge, assuming a transformative role in educational experiences, oriented towards the inclusion, well-being and overall success of students.

The Social Dimension of Art

In the school environment, art plays a fundamental role in promoting empathy, respect for diversity and social inclusion. Through work with multicultural themes and collaboration on artistic projects, artistic education serves as a vehicle to strengthen student's sense of belonging, enabling all students, regardless of their cultural, social or physical differences, to feel integrated and valued. This integrative role of art is reinforced by its character as a universal language, capable of bringing together and connecting different experiences and worldviews (Praun, 2020).

Engagement in collective artistic practices enhances the development of socio-emotional skills, such as interpersonal communication, co-operation and appreciation of diversity. Participation in these activities promotes students' autonomy, creativity, mutual respect and solidarity, core elements for the formation of active citizens who are conscious of their social responsibility. As highlighted by UNESCO (2023), artistic education is indispensable for addressing contemporary social challenges, contributing to the construction of a culture of peace, inclusion and social justice by shaping resilient and culturally sensitive individuals.

Art also favours the understanding of others through the expression of personal and collective emotions and experiences, stimulating the acceptance of otherness. Access to and participation in the arts broaden students' cultural horizons, fostering awareness of the identities and histories that make up society. Praun (2020) points out that the social dimension of art is closely linked to students' engagement with their cultural and historical contexts, generating an essential knowledge for democratic coexistence and for respect for diversity.

Beyond its direct impact on interpersonal relationships, the integration of art with other curricular areas increases its educational potential, by promoting democratic values, tolerance and critical thinking (Reis, 2022). A school that values the social dimension of art

contributes to the creation of more open, dialogic and inclusive school communities, where each child is recognised and respected in their uniqueness and difference.

Studies on art-based social interventions in vulnerable contexts indicate that artistic practices can be powerful tools for social inclusion and student empowerment (Silva et al., 2024). Art programmes in social housing neighbourhoods demonstrate that art not only provides a safe space for emotional expression but also strengthens community bonds, fosters creativity and enhances cultural literacy (Directorate-General for Education, 2020). Thus, the social dimension of art in school is essential not only for forming intellectually competent students, but also for nurturing empathetic, compassionate and active citizens committed to building a pluralistic and inclusive society.

Artistic Education as an Integral Part of the School Curriculum

Integrating artistic education transversally into the school curriculum is fundamental for building innovative, creative and inclusive school. This integration must go beyond the isolated teaching of artistic subjects, promoting an interdisciplinary and contextualised approach that places the student at the centre of the learning process. Active methodologies, based on the participation, autonomy and student protagonism, are essential to enhance the development of creativity and problem-solving capacity, skills that are increasingly valued for personal and professional life in the 21st century.

The curriculum should allow for the articulation of the arts with other areas of knowledge and with the students' social reality. Interdisciplinary projects involving visual arts, music, dance, theatre and dramatic expression enrich teaching-learning processes, making them more dynamic, meaningful and contextualised. This expanded approach is directly reflected in the full development of cognitive, social and emotional skills, preparing students for contemporary challenges (Marques, 2023; Directorate-General for Education, 2023).

In the case of early childhood education and the 1st cycle of basic education, artistic expressions are recognised as fundamental for the global and integrated development of the child, as outlined in the official curricular guidelines. The promotion of artistic experiences must be continuous, respecting the diversity of languages and forms of expression, and ensuring their connection with other curricular areas, such as language, sciences and physical education (Directorate-General for Education, 2016; 2023).

Given these facts, the artistic education curriculum should not be viewed as a secondary or complementary space, but rather as an essential component of integral education, capable of stimulating students' aesthetic, cultural and social sensitivity. The transversal nature of the arts contributes to building an inclusive school culture that values diversity and promotes active participation. In contexts marked by learning difficulties or social exclusion, reinforcing

artistic education can act as a significant mechanism for inclusion and motivation (National Council of Education, 2013).

Investing in continuous teacher training for artistic education and providing adequate pedagogical resources are crucial factors for the effective implementation of this integrated curricular model. Well-prepared and motivated schools and teachers can energize innovative pedagogical practices that explore the transformative potential of art in school and in society (National Arts Plan, 2023; Marques, 2023).

Challenges and Opportunities in Artistic Education

Artistic education currently faces multiple challenges that compromise its effectiveness and scope within the school context. Among the main obstacles are the scarcity of material and financial resources, the undervaluation of this area within the curriculum, and the limitation of available time for artistic practices. This reality reflects a narrow view of art, which is often considered secondary in relation to so-called 'core' subjects, such as mathematics and language, thereby reducing the depth and quality of artistic experiences offered to students (Oliveira & Santos, 2023; Silva, 2021).

The lack of updated and integrated educational policies that ensure the qualified and continuous presence of artistic education in the curriculum constitutes another relevant challenge. The implementation of the arts in school requires effective collaboration between educators, managers, artists and local communities, which is not always achieved, thus limiting the transformative potential of artistic education (UNESCO, 2023). Furthermore, the rapid evolution of digital technologies demands the need for constant pedagogical updates, which are not always adequately addressed in teacher training programmes (Pereira, 2022; Sousa, 2024).

However, alongside these difficulties, important opportunities emerge to renew and expand the reach of artistic education. Continuous teacher training, focused on innovative methodologies and the use of new digital technologies, is identified as a fundamental strategy to revitalise art classes, making them more attractive and inclusive. The growing use of digital tools, augmented reality and collaborative platforms enriches learning, by providing interactive and personalised experiences (Pereira, 2022; Sousa, 2024).

Investing in the appreciation of artistic education as a central curriculum component and ensuring adequate resources are essential measures for building more inclusive, creative and critical school environments. When structured in a consistent manner, artistic education contributes to the holistic development of students, promoting essential skills for the 21st century, such as critical thinking, collaboration and empathy (Oliveira & Santos, 2023; UNESCO, 2023). Overcoming these challenges requires clear educational policies, greater

awareness among policymakers, robust teacher training, and the increasing incorporation of technology as an ally of pedagogical practices in the arts. This set of measures is vital to ensure that artistic education fulfils its transformative role in schools and in society.

Conclusion

The commitment to investing in a creative, critical and inclusive school through and for artistic education constitutes a vital strategy to guarantee schools where every child is the protagonist of their own educational journey. An education centred on creativity, critical thinking and inclusion prepares citizens to participate actively in society, respecting diversity and facing challenges with new forms of expression and collaboration. The commitment to art in school thus assumes a decisive role for the individual and collective future (Directorate-General for Education, 2020).

Investing in artistic education is investing in a broad vision, that goes beyond valuing of art as an isolated subject and that recognises the role of art as a fundamental means for each to be able to explore and express their potential authentically and meaningfully. Artistic education fosters the development of creative skills, critical thinking and socio-emotional abilities, preparing students for the challenges of a culturally diverse and complex society.

Inclusion emerges as one of the central pillars of artistic education. Recognised as a universal language and a plural space for expression, art offers opportunities for students from different backgrounds, abilities and with special educational needs to express themselves and feel valued and integrated in the school environment. Through practices that respect and celebrate cultural, social and individual diversity, schools become spaces where respect for others, tolerance and solidarity come to life, promoting a democratic and inclusive school culture (Ministry of Education, 2023).

This commitment demands profound transformations in school structures and practices. Continuous teacher training, focused on integration of active methodologies and innovative resources, is essential. Teachers need tools to manage increasingly diverse school contexts, promoting approaches that respect the different learning paces and interests, while encouraging creativity and critical thinking (Silva, 2023).

Ensuring adequate material and technological resources is crucial to enable diversified artistic practices enriched with digital technologies, such as multimodal platforms and augmented reality. Such resources expand the possibilities for artistic learning, making it more attractive, accessible and connected to contemporary cultural practices.

Thus, we can conclude that investing in artistic education has a positive impact on the entire school community, creating spaces for dialogue and co-operation among students, teachers, families and local communities (Silva, 2023; UNESCO, 2023). This environment fosters

student's emotional and social development and the creation of more welcoming and inclusive school settings. Artistic education is, therefore, an investment in pedagogical innovation, democratisation of learning, and the construction of a culturally rich and socially just society.

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Cultivating Creativity: The Transformative Impact of Art Pedagogy

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Abstract

Art plays a key role in education, stimulating creativity, critical thinking, and emotional growth among students and teachers alike. This chapter explores how integrating artistic practice into the learning process enhances cognitive development, engagement, and interdisciplinary connections. Research has shown that exposure to the arts helps students develop transferable skills necessary in today's dynamic world, such as problem-solving skills and innovative thinking. Moreover, artistic experiences enable teachers' creativity to explore new pedagogies to keep themes and activities relevant. This leads to better connection with their students, encouraging deeper understanding of themselves, others and the world around them. This chapter examines how art-rich curricula contribute to a holistic learning environment, supporting diverse learning styles and embracing inclusivity. By incorporating creativity in education, schools can nurture well-rounded individuals who are equipped not just with technical knowledge but also with the imaginative capacities necessary for lifelong learning and adaptability to the increasing changes. Through an exploration of case studies, academic research, and practical applications, this chapter underscores art's profound ability to transform education, shaping both students and teachers into more engaged, insightful learners. Recognizing and integrating artistic expression within educational systems can lead to more vibrant, innovative, and inclusive learning experiences for all.

Keywords

Creativity; Transformation; Art Education; Cognitive Development; Interdisciplinary; Inclusivity

Introduction

This chapter explores the transformative potential of art pedagogy in cultivating creativity, critical thinking, and lifelong learning practices. Drawing on both foundational scholarship and recent studies, it explores how art education contributes to personal growth, social engagement, and educational reform in a rapidly changing world.

Creativity in education extends far beyond the realm of thinking skills. While often associated with problem-solving and cognitive flexibility, creativity is a multifaceted ability that encompasses emotional, social, and cultural dimensions. It involves the ability to generate innovative and valuable ideas, but also to express identity, engage with uncertainty, and imagine alternative futures. In this broader sense, creativity becomes a way of being and relating, not just a skill to be measured or taught (Pei & Plucker, 2024).

In schools, creativity should be understood as a dynamic process that includes curiosity, risk-taking, and the capacity to make connections across disciplines and experiences. It is nurtured through environments that value exploration, collaboration, and meaning-making. According to Kaufman et al. (2022), the Four-C Model of Creativity, comprising mini-c (personal insights), little-c (everyday creativity), Pro-c (professional-level creativity), and Big-C (outstanding creativity), offers a comprehensive framework for recognizing creativity in different forms and contexts. This model challenges the narrow focus on high-level achievement and instead validates the creative potential of all students.

Moreover, creativity is increasingly seen as essential for preparing students for the complexities of 21st-century life. Harris and De Bruin (2018) argue that creativity is not only about individual expression but also about engaging with real-world problems and nurturing innovation through partnerships, experiential learning, and interdisciplinary approaches. This perspective positions creativity as a core educational value which is integral to personal development, social participation, and lifelong learning. Thus, creativity in education should be cultivated not merely as a cognitive skill but as a holistic, transformative strength that empowers learners to navigate and shape their worlds with imagination, empathy, and action.

In an era defined by rapid technological advancement, global interconnectedness, and complex societal challenges, creativity has emerged as a vital competency for personal, academic, and professional success (UNESCO, 2021). No longer confined to the realm of artists and designers, creativity is now recognized as a foundational skill across disciplines, from science and engineering to business and education (Sawyer, 2023).

International frameworks such as the OECD Learning Compass 2030 emphasize creativity as a core dimension of future-ready competencies (OECD, 2019), while educational research highlights its role in fostering adaptability, critical thinking, and innovation (Cremin, 2012; Lucas & Spencer, 2017). Moreover, in a rapidly changing digital age, cultivating creativity is

viewed as essential to empowering learners to navigate uncertainty and design meaningful futures (Craft, 2019; Henriksen et al., 2016). Within this context, art pedagogy stands at the front position of the transformative endeavour to cultivate creativity, offering approaches that not only nurture imaginative communication but also support collaborative problem-solving and interdisciplinary learning (Robinson & Aronica, 2015). Art pedagogy has long been recognised as a catalyst for developing creativity and self-expression. In recent years, global shifts in education policy have emphasised the importance of creative skills for lifelong learning and employability (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2022).

Art pedagogy, broadly defined as the methods and practices of teaching art, encompasses a rich tapestry of approaches that engage learners in imaginative, expressive, and critical modes of thinking. It is not merely about learning techniques or producing aesthetically pleasing artwork. Rather, it is a dynamic process that stimulates imagination, encourages exploration, risk-taking, and the ability to see the world through multiple lenses. Through drawing, painting, sculpture and digital media, students are provoked to question, interpret, and reimagine their realities, developing cognitive flexibility and emotional depth in the process.

Recent research strongly supports the transformative impact of art education on creativity development. Empirical studies demonstrate that students engaged in sustained artistic practice exhibit significantly enhanced problem-solving abilities and a greater tolerance for uncertainties (Winner et al., 2015). These qualities are essential for navigating complex, real-world challenges. For instance, a longitudinal analysis found that students who experienced high levels of arts engagement performed better in creative problem-solving tasks and developed cognitive flexibility that supports innovation (Catterall et al., 1999; Deasy, 2022). Moreover, art pedagogy has been linked to increased empathy, resilience, and self-efficacy. Such qualities are essential for facing the difficulties of contemporary life (Zazulak et al., 2015).

This chapter begins by examining the theoretical foundations that underpin arts-based education, including constructivist and experiential learning models. It then delves into the mechanisms through which art stimulates creative thinking, highlighting interdisciplinary approaches and the integration of emerging technologies. Pedagogical strategies that support creative development are discussed, alongside the broader societal implications of embedding art education within curricula. Throughout, the chapter draws on recent scholarship and case studies to illuminate how art pedagogy can enable learners to become imaginative, critical, and compassionate contributors to their communities.

By placing art pedagogy as a promoter for creativity, this chapter aims to inspire educators, policymakers, and researchers to reimagine the role of the arts in education, not as a bordering enhancement, but as a central pillar of holistic and transformative learning.

Theoretical Foundations of Art Pedagogy

Art pedagogy is deeply rooted in educational theories that prioritize active engagement, personal meaning-making, and experiential learning. Among the most influential frameworks are constructivist and experiential learning theories, which emphasize the learner's role in constructing knowledge through interaction with their environment, peers, and materials. These theories provide a strong groundwork for understanding how art education cultivates creativity and transforms learning experiences.

Constructivism and Experiential Learning

Constructivism, as articulated by theorists such as Jean Piaget (1976) and Lev Vygotsky (1978), underlines that learners build knowledge through experiences and social interaction. In the context of art education, this translates into art-rooms where students are encouraged to explore, interpret, and create based on their own ways of seeing and lived experiences. Constructivist art pedagogy shifts the focus from passive reception of information to active participation in meaning-making processes. Arts education naturally aligns with constructivist principles. It encourages situations where students engage in real-world tasks, such as exhibitions, and collaborative projects that reflect authentic artistic practices. These experiences not only develop technical skills but also promote higher-order thinking, including analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Samaniego et al., 2024).

Assessment methods in constructivist art-rooms often includes portfolios, peer critiques, and self-reflection, reinforcing the learner's ownership of their creative journey. Experiential learning, advocated by educational theorists like David Kolb (1984), further supports the integration of art into pedagogy. It emphasizes learning through doing, reflection, and application, all of which are the core elements of artistic practice. At the art-room, students learn by experimenting with materials, responding to feedback, and evaluating their ideas. This cyclical process echoes the experiential learning model and enhances students' ability to think creatively and flexibly.

John Dewey, a prominent figure in progressive education, profoundly influenced art pedagogy through his concept of "art as experience" (1934). For Dewey, education and art were inseparable. He envisioned classrooms as spaces where students could engage with sensory experiences, reflect on their meanings, and develop insights that extend beyond the physical artwork. This approach positions art as a vehicle for personal growth and social awareness. Dewey's emphasis on experiential learning and democratic participation continues to shape contemporary art education, encouraging educators to create inclusive, reflective, and student-centred environments.

Building on John Dewey's legacy of experiential and aesthetic learning, Elliot Eisner significantly expanded the theoretical landscape of art pedagogy by highlighting the cognitive

importance of the arts. Eisner argued that traditional schooling often privileges narrowly defined forms of intelligence, such as logical-mathematical and linguistic reasoning, while neglecting the distinctive capacities cultivated through artistic practice, such as visual-spatial reasoning, sensitivity to ambiguity, emotional expression, and aesthetic judgment (Eisner, 2002). He advanced the concept of artistic cognition, emphasizing that perceiving, interpreting, and creating meaning through non-verbal and symbolic forms are essential dimensions of human thought. For Eisner, art education cultivates the ability to navigate complexity and refinement, thereby developing flexible, creative, and critical thinkers. His influential notion of the educational imagination urged teachers to design learning experiences that are responsive, imaginative, and rich in aesthetic engagement.

At the same time, Howard Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences reinforced the call to broaden prevailing definitions of intelligence. Gardner identified a plurality of intelligences, including musical, bodily-kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. These align closely with artistic learning. By acknowledging that students learn and communicate in different ways, Gardner's framework validated the centrality of arts education in cultivating forms of knowledge that are often undervalued in conformist classrooms. Combined, Eisner and Gardner reframe art pedagogy as a critical ground for recognizing and nurturing the full range of human potential. Their understandings highlight how art education not only enriches creative expression but also empowers learners to engage with the complexities of contemporary life in more adaptive, resilient, and innovative ways.

Art Education and the Development of Creativity

Creativity is not a fixed characteristic but a dynamic competence that can be nurtured through intentional educational practices. Art education offers fertile ground for cultivating creativity by engaging learners in processes that demand originality, experimentation, and reflection. Through diverse artistic experiences, students develop core creative abilities, such as confidence, flexibility, elaboration, and originality. These are essential for innovation and problem-solving in all areas of life.

A systematic review of 187 studies in art and design education (Samaniego et al., 2024) found that art pedagogy consistently cultivates several core creative thinking skills: originality (generating new ideas and solutions), fluency (producing several ideas), flexibility (shifting perspectives and approaches), and elaboration (refining and expanding initial ideas). These skills are embedded in art education through open-ended projects, interdisciplinary collaborations, and reflective practices that encourage intellectual risk and comfort with uncertainty. For example, the review highlights that the interdisciplinary projects such as STEAM-based work, nature-based activities, and the use of digital tools serve not only to

broaden students' exposure but also to push them to generate several ideas (fluency), try multiple approaches (flexibility), and then refine or enrich them (elaboration).

Research into co-creation with generative AI has offered new insights into how originality and flexibility can be challenged and enhanced simultaneously. A survey of young learners (Zhang & Xu, 2025) found that collaborating with AI prompted iterative workflows (generate... select... refine), which stimulated cross-modal ideation and elevated critical judgment. This means that students did not simply create, but they also evaluated and refined their choices. Another recent paper on STEAM pedagogies underscores the importance of project-based and inquiry-based learning. Such pedagogies support fluency and flexibility by placing students in real-world problem situations without fixed solutions. But they also reveal challenges: teachers often lack interdisciplinary training, and curricular or institutional constraints can limit how elaborative students' work can be (Sánchez & Cortés, 2024).

Ultimately, art education cultivates these creative thinking skills not by focusing on 'rightness', but by designing learning situations that reward exploration, encourage multiple perspectives, allow for review, and support learners to build on their ideas. These approaches prepare learners not only to generate art but to think creatively in any area.

Interdisciplinary and STEAM Approaches

Art education increasingly intersects with other disciplines through STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) initiatives. These interdisciplinary models position art as a catalyst for integrative thinking and innovation. For example, students might design dynamic sculptures that incorporate principles of physics or create visual narratives that explore historical events (Zastavker, 2017). Such projects deepen understanding across subjects while enhancing creative abilities. Moreover, empirical studies show that embedding arts into STEAM through project- and inquiry-based learning helps students develop problem-solving and design thinking skills, imaginative expression, and more positive attitudes toward STEM fields (Felipe et al., 2024).

Besides STEM fields, interdisciplinary art pedagogy encourages students to make connections between seemingly different ideas, encouraging cognitive flexibility and holistic problem-solving. This approach reflects the complexity of real-world challenges, which often require collaborative and cross-disciplinary solutions.

Building on this perspective, art education can serve as a link where diverse domains of knowledge intersect in meaningful ways. For example, when students engage in projects that draw on scientific observation, social inquiry, and creative interpretation, they learn that disciplinary boundaries are porous and that knowledge becomes richer when it is interconnected (Marshall, 2004). Such integrative practices do not simply broaden skill sets but help cultivate dispositions of curiosity, adaptability, and resilience. These qualities are

crucial for addressing contemporary issues such as climate change, migration, and technological transformation, all of which demand both analytic and imaginative responses (Gruenewald, 2003; Graham, 2007).

An interdisciplinary approach also opens possibilities for new pedagogical models that foreground inquiry and collaboration. Through interdisciplinary art projects, for instance, students might work with recycled or junk materials to design installations that both critique consumer culture and imagine more sustainable futures. These practices resonate with Eisner's (2002) goals for art education, particularly in teaching students to embrace multiple viewpoints, make moral judgments, and imagine future scenarios. Through such experiences, learners are encouraged to see art not as an isolated technical skill, but as a practice embedded in environmental and social systems.

Moreover, the interdisciplinary character of art education invites partnerships beyond the classroom. Collaborations with local scientists, community organizers, or cultural institutions can situate artmaking in authentic contexts where knowledge is co-constructed and shared. When students design a mural addressing biodiversity loss in partnership with environmental groups, or when they create digital narratives that preserve local spoken histories, the process integrates disciplinary expertise while reinforcing public responsibility (Macdonald & Jónsdóttir, 2014). These kinds of projects not only strengthen conceptual understanding but also help students recognize themselves as active contributors to societal and environmental well-being.

Importantly, such pedagogical approaches challenge the assumption that art education is supplementary or decorative within the curriculum. Instead, art education can be understood as a critical site of integrative learning where imagination and reason merge. By linking artistic inquiry to pressing real-world concerns, interdisciplinary art pedagogy helps students envision alternative futures and equips them with the critical and creative competencies necessary to follow them. In this way, art education affirms its role as both an intellectual and ethical endeavour, preparing students to respond to challenges with empathy, creativity, and informed action.

Emotional Literacy

Besides cognitive skills, art education supports emotional development and psychological well-being. Engaging in artistic creation allows students to communicate emotions, process experiences, and build self-awareness. These emotional competencies are closely linked to creativity, as they enable learners to tap into personal meaning and empathy, which are key drivers of imaginative thinking (Dudar, 2024).

Artistic activity involves well-developed neural circuits that integrate perception, thinking, memory, and feeling. These networks are strengthened through repeated, manageable

emotional experiences, illustrating how the brain's use-dependent nature supports growth (Nixon, 2016). In this way, the arts offer a structured yet flexible medium for exercising and deepening emotional intelligence alongside intellectual skills.

Malchiodi (2003) highlights that artmaking is a form of non-verbal communication that draws heavily on the brain's right hemisphere, which is closely linked to the processing of emotional states and imagery. By stimulating this hemisphere, creative activity helps connect conscious and unconscious memories, weaving them into coherent meaning. Within an educational context, this underscores the teacher's role not only as an instructor but also as a facilitator of emotional and creative communication. By designing stimulating, inclusive, and open-ended learning atmospheres, art teachers can guide students to channel emotions into productive artistic processes (Eisner, 2003; Greene, 2000).

Emotional literacy, defined as the ability to recognize, understand, and use emotions constructively, is woven into every stage of the creative process. Skills such as intrinsic motivation, perseverance, and the capacity to cope with frustration become essential when students work through artistic challenges. These emotional resources direct creative energy toward problem-solving and innovation (Syrotkina et al., 2022). Significantly, limitations often spark creativity: students who devote significant time to researching, sketching, reflecting, and reviewing tend to create more original artworks than those who simply copy and reproduce existing art (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). While a genuine creative process is frequently marked by uncertainty and frustration, such struggles form a vital part of developing resilience and originality (Sawyer, 2021).

At the same time, art education introduces students to the emotional complexities of judgment and evaluation. Artworks that communicate raw emotional intensity are sometimes undervalued by audiences accustomed to predictable or aesthetically "pleasant" images. Navigating such responses requires tolerance of doubts, an emotional skill strongly associated with creativity (Zenasni, 2008). Learning to accept and work with these uncertainties helps students transform helplessness into strength.

Ultimately, emotional literacy empowers learners to anticipate anxieties, manage shifting moods, and reframe emotional experiences as stimuli for creative thought and action (Fancourt et al., 2025). In fast-paced contemporary contexts, where multitasking, deadlines, and pressure dominate, these competences are not only dynamic for artistic development but also transferable to broader life skills. Through art education, students build the emotional and cognitive foundations necessary for resilience, adaptability, and imaginative problem-solving, equipping them for challenges.

Art education has been shown to enhance organizational abilities such as memory, attention, and decision-making (Posner et al., 2008). Activities like sketching from observation and developing ideas throughout an art project require sustained focus, strategic planning, and

iterative refinement. These cognitive demands strengthen neural pathways associated with creative thinking and academic success. Moreover, art education promotes resilience and a growth mindset. Students learn to direct failure, revise their work, and persist through challenges. These skills are essential for creative development and lifelong learning (Winner et al., 2015).

Critical Thinking

While creativity is often the most celebrated outcome of art education, its capacity to cultivate critical thinking is equally transformative. Art pedagogy encourages learners to observe, interpret, question, and reflect. These skills are foundational to critical thinking (Maras & Shand, 2023). Through dialogic, inquiry-based, and empathetic approaches, the art-room becomes a space where students not only express themselves but also engage deeply with ideas, diverse perspectives, and societal issues.

Critical thinking and reasoning involve making value judgments about what to do and how to represent points of view in art. For instance, when students interpret artworks and reflect on ideas and meaning, they can then take practical action through creating their art. Indeed, during art lessons students are constantly engaged in evaluating objects, images, and ideas, and in shaping the direction of their creative interpretations and representations (Bowen et al., 2014).

Visual Literacy

One of the central contributions of art education to creativity lies in its emphasis on sustained observation and critical engagement. Through the ongoing actions of observation, interpretation, reflection, creation, and evaluation, art education trains students in the process of visual literacy, where they learn to decode symbols, patterns, and narratives. Visual literacy goes beyond the ability to recognize images; it involves understanding the cultural, historical, and emotional contexts embedded within them. By learning to “read” visual forms, students develop analytical skills that extend beyond the arts and into other domains of knowledge, such as history, science, and media studies.

When students observe a painting, analyse its formal qualities, and reflect on its possible meanings, they are exercising the same capacities required for problem-solving in non-art fields. They must generate hypotheses, test interpretations, and evaluate their credibility. These iterative processes of inquiry reflect the cycle of creative thinking found in scientific research, technological innovation, and entrepreneurial practice (Eisner, 2002). In this sense, creativity cultivated through art education is transferable, enabling learners to approach complex challenges across disciplines with openness and flexibility.

Art education practices further illustrate this potential. For instance, students designing a collaborative mural concerning environmental sustainability must research ecological issues, synthesize information, and represent complex themes through imagery. Such projects combine visual interpretation with social responsibility and require both collaborative and individual creativity. Similarly, digital art and augmented reality tasks encourage students to blend technical skills with imaginative expression, pushing them to think critically about how technology can expand artistic possibilities. These experiences model the fusion of creativity and analysis, equipping students with adaptable skills relevant to twenty-first century challenges.

Furthermore, art education encourages students to embrace uncertainty and multiple perspectives. Unlike disciplines that may prioritize the 'right' answers, art thrives on multiplicity, contradiction, and interpretation. For instance, two students may interpret the same artwork in different ways, and both interpretations can hold validity when supported by thoughtful reasoning. This nurtures tolerance of ambiguity, a disposition strongly associated with creativity and innovation in educational and professional contexts. By learning that problems may have more than one solution, students strengthen their capacity for divergent thinking and problem-solving (Hetland et al., 2007).

Ultimately, art education functions as a laboratory for creativity, where students learn to balance imagination with analysis, intuition with discipline, and expression with evaluation. These habits of mind, rooted in visual literacy, equip students to transfer their creative capacities into diverse areas of life, making art education a lifelong dynamic contributor to both personal growth and societal innovation.

Creativity as a Lifelong Asset

Creativity nurtured through art education is much more than the cultivation of creative thinking skills and extends far beyond schooling. Creativity is not confined to the production of artworks, but rather becomes a transferable set of skills and attitudes that can be applied across many aspects of life. Whether designing sustainable solutions, crafting captivating narratives, or leading collaborative initiatives, creative thinkers are better prepared to address the complexities of contemporary times. In a world increasingly characterized by rapid technological change, environmental uncertainty, and social diversity, the ability to think/ act flexibly and imaginatively is a lifelong strength.

Conclusion

Art education cultivates this lifelong strength by encouraging learners to generate original ideas, consider multiple perspectives, and persist through uncertainties. These habits of mind are not only essential for artistic practice but also for professional and daily life. For example,

the resilience developed through revising sketches or experimenting with unfamiliar materials is like the perseverance required in entrepreneurial ventures or scientific inquiry. Likewise, the empathy encouraged by interpreting and creating artworks translates into stronger communication skills and the capacity to engage meaningfully with diverse communities (Robinson, 2011). Thus, creativity developed in art-rooms prepares students to be adaptable, visionary problem-solvers who can navigate real-world challenges with both innovation and sensitivity.

Recent global education frameworks highlight that creativity is not merely desirable but indispensable for personal growth, academic achievement, and professional adaptability. UNESCO's report *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education* (2021) emphasizes that creativity must be cultivated as a core competency for lifelong learning, enabling individuals to continuously adapt to change, imagine alternative futures, and contribute to more inclusive and sustainable societies. This framing emphasizes that creativity should not be treated as a one-off school subject, but as a sustainable ability integrated into all stages of education and beyond.

Within art education, creativity is inherently linked to competencies that UNESCO (2021) identifies as central for building resilient societies. Systems thinking competence emerges when students contextualize their artistic work within ecological, cultural, and social frameworks. Anticipatory competence develops when learners use visual forms to imagine different scenarios of the future. Normative competence is practiced when students address ethical questions in representation and meaning-making. Collaboration competence grows through collective art projects, which depend on empathy, dialogue, and shared responsibility. Furthermore, critical thinking competence is embedded in the evaluative and interpretive dimensions of artmaking, where learners must question assumptions and articulate informed judgments.

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Dancing Cross-cultural Rhythms: The Bakhtinian Hybridity in Practice

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Abstract

This chapter examines how cross-cultural rhythmic dialogues between Tap and Bharatanatyam dance vocabularies contributed to a new practice, Tap Natyam, that not only fostered renewal in dance pedagogy but also in performance at a North American university setting. As we deliberately mixed two dances into our choreographies, we are interested in seeing how our practice aligns with Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin's (1981 [1935]) definition of intentional hybridity, which refers to the conscious mixing of two different languages and voices. Our objectives are two-fold: first, to describe the process of classroom exchanges between the teachers and learners that opened up a space for dialogue, and second, to demonstrate how such dialogues in choreographies fit into the Bakhtinian hybridity. The discussions reveal how our liberal approach reconciles dance learning-teaching with a broader goal of inclusion. As a cross-rhythmic presentation, Tap Natyam contributes to a broader understanding of performance politics in a globalized context. Drawing on a mixed-method approach and two choreographic case studies, we argue that our choreographies align with the Bakhtinian definition of intentional hybridity, which never gravitates towards a single consciousness or identity. Based on our findings, we recommend similar dance curricula in higher education that value diversity and accommodate students' voices to improve the overall learning experience.

Keywords Choreography; Critical Pedagogy; Dance in Higher Education; Hybridity; Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin

Cross-cultural Rhythms and Innovations in Dance

Over the past two decades, global networking and travel have led many dance practitioners to innovate new cross-cultural collaborations that merge distinct cultural expressions. This trend is also seen among Indian Classical dance practitioners who have blended Kathak and Bharatanatyam dances with Tap and Flamenco, resulting in creations including Flamenco Natyam (Puri, 2001), Ka-Tap (De Bertone, 1995), and Kathak-Flamenco (Phillips, 2013). Similarly, the blending of Tap and Bharatanatyam dances has resulted in a new genre of performance at a midwestern university setting in North America, and this study explores those cross-cultural rhythmic dialogues that emerge from classroom conversations and culminate on stage.

Tap and Bharatanatyam dances possess long cultural histories, although they are markedly different in their presentations. Tap dance originated in the United States, at the intersection of African and Irish dance traditions. Over time, Tap dance has evolved into a global dance form, characterized by abundant footwork and body rhythms (Ames & Siegelman, 1977; Crawford, 2014; Knowles, 2002). Bharatanatyam dance has transitioned from temples to theaters, from India to diasporas, as a reconstructed dance form that combines storytelling and abstract dance (Meduri, 1996; O'Shea, 2007; Soneji, 2011). While the former dominates in improvisation and personal expression, the latter includes preset rhythmic sequences and the technique of mime. Tap shoes are used to accentuate rhythm, whereas bare feet adorned with ankle bells highlight rhythm in Bharatanatyam dance. Notwithstanding their disparities, we employed these genres to pursue social, cultural, and pedagogical connectedness.

As a cross-rhythmic practice, Tap Natyam broadly represents the auditory interactions between tap shoes and the barefoot stomping and the sound of the metallic bell of Bharatanatyam dance. Looking at it, Baker wrote to Banerjee: 'To respond in a very visceral manner to such structured sequences [of Bharatanatyam] felt very personal, as if responding in a conversation' (e-mail, May 17, 2009). This expression resonates with Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin's linguistic version of hybridization, wherein two voices mix or encounter within a single utterance (1981 [1935]: 271), leading to different viewpoints that promote renewal and enrichment.

In his essay, Bakhtin defined intentional hybridity as a deliberate blend of differing worldviews, and given this, it never gravitates towards a single voice. Coming to our study, the dialogue between these two forms created a new 'double-voiced' performance aesthetic in Tap Natyam. As it was our 'conscious' choice to blend these two forms without prioritizing one over the other, we hypothesize that our collaboration is an instance of intentional hybridity. The aim of the chapter is thus two-fold: first, to describe the process of classroom exchanges between two teachers and learners that facilitated cross-cultural dialogue, and

second, to examine whether our choreographic dialogues comply with the Bakhtinian assertions of hybridity.

As a contemporary term, hybridity has expanded beyond genetics to include the discourse of cybernetics, language, structural hybridization, the idea of interdisciplinarity, and cultural practices (Pieterse, 2001, p. 223). Homi Bhabha (1994) introduced the concept of hybridity in postcolonial studies to challenge the essentialist view by arguing that ‘all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity’ (Bhabha in Rutherford, 1990, p. 211). The meeting of two cultures can generate a ‘third space’ (Bhabha in Rutherford, 1990), where each culture ‘retains its presence, but it is no longer a representation of an essence; it is now a partial presence’ (Bhabha, 1994, p. 176).¹ Drawing on such assumptions, we argue that the practice of Tap Natyam is a ‘partial presence’ from both dances and not an essence. And thus, we situate Tap Natyam within a broader trend of cross-cultural collaborations in dance and the discourse of postcolonial studies.

Earlier, in lectures at various universities in the USA and India (2006-8), co-author Banerjee (2008) always grappled with complexities in categorizing these new works: ‘Is it a pedagogical strategy? Or just a juxtaposition, an interface, a cultural pollination, or a fusion?’ (Banerjee, 2008). These inquiries indicate the problems of labeling a contemporary practice, particularly when it straddles across multiple genres. Both in India and the USA, dance practitioners and scholars labeled this experimentation as ‘fusion.’ However, such a blanket claim oversimplified the complex socio-cultural processes that went into its conceptualization. Specifically, how the selection of movements, sounds, and expressions, alongside how the two dance teachers—an Indian and an American— negotiated their differences remained uninformed by theory. The chapter thus provides a nuanced framework to understand the hybrid aesthetics that emerged from these interactions.

For the purpose of the chapter, we examine the following research questions: How did combining Tap and Bharatanatyam forms help students develop cross-cultural understanding and learning skills? What pedagogical strategies were used to effectively bridge cultural gaps in the classroom? How do choreographies that combine these two forms adhere to Bakhtin’s concept of intentional hybridity?

This research is driven by our backgrounds as dance teachers who have been keen on promoting cross-cultural practices for almost two decades in this contextualized educational setting. Methodologically, we draw on autoethnography alongside classroom observations, learners’ narratives (original names used with permission), dance readings, a dance review, and photographs. We argue that Bakhtin’s theoretical model supports the idea of renewal through hybridity and functions as a catalyst to foster dialogism rather than superficial blending of these two dance forms. This chapter explores how the making of Tap Natyam can

contribute to a broader understanding of dance pedagogy and performance politics, encouraging an empathetic understanding of the interconnectedness of globalized cultures.

Bakhtin's Organic and Intentional hybridity

In his essay, Bakhtin offers a critical framework for understanding cultural mixing and the formation of new linguistic expressions through his binary model of organic and intentional hybridity. According to him, organic hybridity is the 'unconscious' mixing of distinct voices within an utterance. As opposed, there are 'two consciousnesses, two language-intentions, two *voices* and consequently two accents participating in an intentional and conscious artistic hybrid' (1981 [1935], p. 360, italics in original). Therefore, two viewpoints are not blended in intentional hybridity; rather, they are set against each other in dialogues. The intentional hybridity, particularly evident in novels, presents double-voicedness in cultural expressions through contestation. It is an instance of 'artistic' hybridity and thus valorizes the process of cultural blending rather than a seamless integration. In other words, intentional hybridity disrupts a social order while simultaneously celebrating the space for dialogue.

Organic hybridity is marked by the slow assimilation of foreign words, which often go unnoticed in everyday communication (1981 [1935], p. 358). Contrastingly, intentional hybridity occurs at a much faster pace using conscious strategies to create hyphenated identity categories. The former romanticizes cultural evolution but neglects the complexities of power dynamics, whereas the latter never dismisses the active agencies or communities that play in shaping their cultural identities.

Based on these assumptions and our hypothesis, we are interested in examining how intentional hybridity informs our pedagogical and choreographic choices. We particularly value this kind of hybridity because it acts as a relevant analytical lens for discussing the intersection of two diverse dances, allowing us to have a dialogue between them.

Discussions

Dialogue Between Two Dance Languages and Rhythms

The concept of 'double-voicedness' emerged at the heart of this pedagogy, as there was an interplay between dual voices in classrooms. From the beginning, the classroom 'soundscape' created an engaging environment for the visiting teacher:

It was a late afternoon class of the spring semester in studio 196, where Janice was immersed in teaching Tap dance to her students [...]. In the latter half of her class, I was invited to introduce Bharatanatyam. The learners were unfamiliar with my practice. And I was curious to see the first-hand live demonstration of this form of dance. I was strikingly diverted by the sounds of tap shoes from a group of 16

students, particularly the counts and meter of the rhythm. The steps were rendered in a very fast tempo. Soon my mind translated the sounds as

/taka dimi ta- -- //

/taka dimi ta- -- //

/taka dimi taka dimi//

/taka dimi ta- --//

(Banerjee, *Reflective Journal*, February 8, 2006).

Generally, when we hear any unfamiliar language, we translate it into our language for better understanding. In this context, Banerjee struggled to understand Tap counts and had to translate them into Bharatanatyam dance language (metrical sequences) that she was already familiar with. This translation underlines the ‘double-voicedness’ in communication, where multiple interpretations coexist. Conversely, the students (predominantly white Americans) struggled to understand the counts and reproduce the foundational movements of Bharatanatyam dance (known as *adavu*) in space. These uneasy edges of teaching-learning raised a critical pedagogical query: how to bridge cross-cultural gaps to facilitate the learning? With this understanding, the initial negotiation in the teaching technique was to move away from the personal style, facilitating an open approach to teaching Bharatanatyam dance (Banerjee, 2013).

Because the rhythmic footwork is the focal point of appreciation in both these dance forms, we endeavored to dig out the relation between them. Many learners in the beginning demonstrated resistance to Bharatanatyam dance, given its unfamiliarity and level of difficulty. By recognizing the learners’ needs, an adaptive method was designed (Banerjee, 2013), in which Bharatanatyam’s meters and rhythms were introduced even before starting with the unitary movements. From the degree of easiness, *chatusra ekam tala*, a regular meter of four counts, the syllables of which are recited with an equidistant gap as /ta ka di mi// was introduced. The time-keeping activity (a clap following three counts, starting with the small finger) was demonstrated. Baker complemented this meter as ‘1, 2, 3, 4,’ followed by its double speed /taka dimi taka dimi// as ‘1&2&3&4’ (Banerjee, 2013, p. 31). Consequently, the overlapping or contrasting techniques and sounds of both dance styles created a dialogical space for learning. Echoing Aoki’s (2005) pedagogical assertions about the lived curriculum, where initial educational objectives diverge from real learning experiences, this context showed how the disparity between intended instructional design and delivery opened up the way for a hybrid pedagogy.

In our subsequent lessons, we took a multi-modal approach and highlighted the interconnection between the footsteps and sounds (Fig. 1a). Interestingly, Bharatanatyam’s *adavus* are not merely physical movements that are set in a meter, but they are inextricably bound with sounds. For instance, in *tatta adavu*, the word ‘*tatta*’ in the Tamil language means

‘stamping feet on the ground.’ Also, the sound (*tat*) that is produced when the foot slantingly touches the floor.² Furthermore, we wanted them to experience how the sounds of *tatta adavu* would differ when performed on a wooden floor compared to a concrete one. While teaching the steps, we also encouraged the learners to share their feelings with us. In this way, the method promoted a multifaceted understanding of these dances. By focusing on sound, visual, and kinesthetic aspects, this non-linear method provided an open space where the learners could simultaneously explore two techniques. At the end of a rehearsal for a departmental showing, a learner’s exclamation–‘Let’s form a star!’ (September 24, 2023)–indicates the creativity, enthusiasm, inclusion, and collaborative aspect of the class (Fig. 1b). This approach corresponds to Elliot W. Eisner’s (2002) call for a curriculum that values multiple intelligences and aesthetic modes of knowing, along with William Doll’s (1993) emphasis on non-linear and flexible methodology in arts-based education.



Fig. 1a Meetings of two cross-cultural foot positions. Photo: Suparna Banerjee

Fig. 1b Forming a star. Photo: Suparna Banerjee

As observed, language played a pivotal role in enhancing students’ engagement. Saying and writing the vernacular terms from Bharatanatyam dance (*‘nritta,’ ‘abhinaya,’ ‘tala,’ ‘jathi,’* and *‘hasta’*) on the blackboard encouraged the learners to pronounce them (Banerjee, *Reflective Journal*, February, 2006), which facilitated their knowledge of Sanskrit, an ancient language. Speaking in others’ language (rhythmic counts) showcased how it disrupted monologic expressions. Baker introduced steps, including shuffle, flap, and scuffle, for beginners (Figs.

2a-b). She demonstrated flap (a brush that lands as a weight transfer) and shuffle (goes forward and back before it steps), and thereafter, a combination of these with claps and turns. Concurrently, Banerjee tried matching learners' movements produced by bare feet. In this way, these educators created a rhythmic consonance that enhanced the learning experience. In the next stage, codified hand gestures were added (Fig. 3). Drawing on this, we contend that our pedagogical strategy was rooted in Bakhtin's intentional hybridity, a conscious integration of 'two language-intentions' (1981 [1935], p. 360).



Figs. 2a & 2b: Students practicing Tap steps at Iowa State Dance. Videostills. Video: Suparna Banerjee



Fig. 3 Hybridization of two dance languages. Photo Courtesy. Suparna Banerjee

After having a three-week training, students were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire and the story method. Thereafter, learners' interviews were recorded and subjected to narrative analysis (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Many voices highlighted the challenges they encountered when engaging with the dance form that differed from their own. As expressed by a learner: 'I think my training with [the instructor] has opened my eyes to different types of dances. Before she came to ISU, I really didn't think about cultural dances

from other countries. I have enjoyed working with her and have learned a lot of new information and ideas' (personal interview, October 15, 2007). Another student told about a common misconception: 'I never really thought about how people from other countries danced. I assumed everyone danced like us' (personal interview, October 15, 2007). By situating two worldviews within a single frame, these exercises exposed learners to diversity and thus enriched the cultural knowledge of the self with those of the 'other.' This finding is relevant to the study of Anabela Moura and Gabriela Barbosa (2018), where they argue that art is instrumental in deepening students' cultural, historical, and social knowledge, fostering a broader worldview.

As observed, challenges remained, particularly in learning the technique of Bharatanatyam dance. In his interview, Kenneth stated: 'Technique was very difficult. Understanding the culture [of Bharatanatyam dance] would have helped' (e-mail, February 15, 2007). This statement indicates the significance of cultural nuances in dance training. To another learner, the long dance sequences and hand gestures were difficult: 'It was hard to do such long dances when we were just beginning this type of dance [...]. I found the hand movements to be very hard to follow. So, by slowing down that part and showing us more closely, it would have helped us to learn better and do more with the audio track' (personal interview, September 23, 2006). Through action research (Banerjee, 2013), a slower approach was taken that included isolations and fragmentary movements before going into complex sequences, making the learning accessible to all. This pedagogy is consistent with William F. Pinar's (2004) view of the curriculum not as a fixed framework but as a dynamic conversation.

Similarly, Banerjee's journal entry points out her difficulty when she grappled with the physical demands of a new dance: 'When I wore a pair of tap shoes and tried some of their steps, my foot felt heavy. It felt like I was dancing on the floor for the first time (Reflective Journal, February 8, 2006). The realization underpins the value of empathy in dance education. Besides, the struggle that the learners and instructors endured indicates the connection between them, reinforcing the idea that learning and teaching are a shared journey.

The classroom demonstrations of difficult rhythmic structures led to a deeper engagement of structure. For instance, a student noted how a 7-beat cycle (*mishra chapu tala*, recited as /takita/taka/dimi//) was said differently:

I noticed when the instructor tapped it out with her feet, she was very specific about whether she hit the floor flat-footed, with her heel, or with the ball of her foot. It was also interesting to me as well when she explained their different rhythms and how they were broken down. It was also interesting to me as well when she explained different rhythms and how they were broken down. For example, a 7 count wasn't 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. It was 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 1, 2 (e-mail, February 15, 2007).

Thus, such hand demonstrations of rhythms offered the learner a complex understanding about rhythm (that the count is not sequential but a fragmented one), revealing that rhythm is not a monolithic concept. Here, the learner translated the above cycle into its English numerical equivalent, much akin to Banerjee's translation of tapping into '*jathi*', suggesting the dialogic nature of the pedagogy. Based on this, we argue that the finding corresponds with Susan W. Stinson's research (2016), which recognizes dance education as an embodied knowledge, where students engage deeply with the material and its cultural significance.

Two Case Studies

We hypothesized that Tap Natyam is an instance of Bakhtin's intentional hybridity because we consciously chose to mix two distinct dance languages, and in this section, we explore this idea by reading two dances, namely *Classic Frantic* (2006) and *Equilibrium* (2007), to see how theory and practice can inform one another.

Presented at a student-led show, *Classic Frantic* deliberately mixed the sounds of Bharatanatyam's rhythms and Tap steps, set against a background of western music, creating a unique cultural dialogue. As a collaborative work, its title itself implies deliberate contrast, inviting audiences to witness how the sculptural quality of Bharatnatyam dance coexists with the energetic rhythm of jazz music and the syncopation of Tap dance in an eight-count cycle. The costumes visually stressed the cultural collision (Fig. 4a). The choreographic design—the act of holding hands—symbolizes a bridge, which reinforces our pedagogic inquiry about connecting these two dance traditions in the class (Fig 4b).

Elsewhere, Raji Puri and La Conja moved away from the conventional '*sawal-jawab*' ('call and response') format in their Flamenco Natyam collaboration; instead, they created a dialogue that respects both the forms (Puri, 2001). In contrast, we used call-and-response sequences as a powerful aesthetic tool that focused on the collective joy of rhythm without any competition or assertion of superiority in *Classic Frantic*. Previously, Banerjee (2014) applied Bakhtin's intentional hybridity to Britain's contemporary Bharatnatyam choreographies that draw on diverse dance forms and aesthetic sensibilities to create a polyphonic practice. Returning to this context, the rhythmic juxtaposition aligns with Bakhtin's concept of polyphony that rests upon 'a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses.' This piece, therefore, did not restrict two voices by a single authorial consciousness; rather, it encouraged 'a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world' (Bakhtin, 1985 [1929], p. 6).



Fig. 4a Costumes of *Classic Frantic* (2006). Photo Courtesy. Suparna Banerjee

Fig. 4b Two (dance) languages form a bridge. *Classic Frantic* (2006). Videostill. Courtesy of Iowa State Dance

This cross-cultural rhythm can also be understood by Bakhtin's concept of literary language that is 'the living mix of varied and opposing voices' (Bakhtin, 1981 [1935], p. 49). For example, in a sequence, the Tap dancers were playing their hands on the floor, while Banerjee was dancing *metta adavu* (moving to the side while stomping). Based on all of these, we contend that this choreography exemplifies the Bakhtinian hybridity in its expression. Visually, it countered essentialized ideas of cultures and celebrated cultural fragmentation. This is also consistent with Bhabha's definition of cultural hybridity, because it introduced 'new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation' (1994: 1).

Applying the Bakhtinian model in cultural studies, Pnina Werbner argues that intentional hybrids can 'shock, change, challenge, revitalize or disrupt through deliberate, intended fusions of unlike social languages and images' (1997: 5). In our case, this conscious mixing was liberating, revitalizing, and simply 'fun' as the collaboration expanded our understanding of the 'other'. In several correspondences with Banerjee, Baker expressed her excitement: 'It is a wonderful juxtaposition of rhythms from two perspectives...Responding through improvisation to a very structured set of culturally pre-determined rhythmic patterns [of Bharatanatyam] was very thrilling' (email to Banerjee, May 17, 2009). Elsewhere, she expressed her perplexity over their cultural dialogue, as this deliberate hybridity challenged neat boundaries: 'The juxtaposition of the classic rhythms of India with the American tap dance and jazz music was very unusual.' Nonetheless, she saw the potentiality of this new work: 'The work of Tap Natyam was a debut of fusion work for the future' (e-mail, April 8, 2006).

Equally, the hybridity in practice evoked feelings of rupture for Banerjee, as the boundaries of 'pure' repertoire were displaced. Banerjee was overjoyed yet shocked because she did not include any element of theatricality (or mime) in the collaboration. She expressed her internal conflicts: 'Initially, I was caught in an inner dichotomy between tradition and change.

Deviation from techniques or music often attracts negative criticism' (Banerjee, *Reflective Journal*, February 26, 2006). This inner split indicates a broader struggle within the dance community regarding the preservation of cultural heritage and the need for innovation.

In a review, Taryn Packheiser wrote that *Classic Frantic* was 'entertaining,' while 'it left questions to be answered considering cultural appropriation and responsibility towards history.' She was interested in the future collaboration when she said, 'It would have been nice to see a deeper connection between the rudimentary elements of African American developed tap dancing and Bharatanatyam.' She went on adding: 'My advice for this experience would be to go deeper into the actual meanings that abstract movement could portray. I am personally interested in seeing content and context fully explored versus superficial pure entertainment dance' (Packheiser, 2006). From the above narratives by Baker, Banerjee, and Packheiser, it is evident that the cultural mixing in choreographic practices not only presents opportunities for growth and cultural understanding of otherness, but also necessitates a subtle balance between honoring tradition and embracing innovation.

Showcased at the university's annual dance festival, *Barjiche*, rhythmic sequences from both the dances collided in Baker's *Equilibrium*³ for greater interdependence and a cause (energy conservation). Baker's words are consistent with the idea of intentional hybridity:

In developing the concept, I was looking for one word to describe the 'dance' of the re-balancing of human interaction with the organic. I was seeking iconic symbols. The sound of the tap shoes as the passing of time [...] All of the images, words, movements, and props were to create a collage that would have a simple and direct message and task for the viewer that aimed to balance human interactions and also practice (e-mail to Banerjee, May 15, 2009).

Drawing on the above statement, it is argued that Baker adopted two voices and languages to create a 'conscious' hybrid and hence it echoes the Bakhtinian concept of intentional hybridity. Clearly, as seen in the phorograph (Fig. 5a), two distinct accents and viewpoints engage in dialogue rather than blending seamlessly. The contrasting aesthetic of Bharatanatyam *nadai* (stylized walking) and the medium tempo tapping rendered it an 'artistic' hybrid. In another sequence, the inclusion of the different orientations (front versus back) allowed a space for opposing ideologies (Fig. 5b). As a dialogue between two opposing techniques, this piece facilitated an escape from the rigidity of the repertoire of Bharatanatyam. The collision between the two differing worlds of the artist and scientist was expressed through Tap, American Modern, and Bharatanatyam dance forms.

Baker's perspective seeks to balance human interactions through symbols and movements, aiming for a direct message that celebrates dialogues and the act of re-balancing cultural

identities. The title itself underpins a metaphorical search to seek a balance between the two traditions. This is further illustrated by the use of the Nataraja pose⁴ (Fig. 6). The tap sounds and Bharatanatyam *jathi* (a sequence of rhythmic counts in a given meter), the religious chant of *Hare Krishna*⁵ and western musical beats rendered it to be a polyphonic practice. By employing various aesthetic sensibilities, including drapery, music, and rhythm, we argue that this piece embodies the Bakhtinian intentional hybridity by challenging a single perspective.



Fig. 5a Stylized walk juxtaposed with slow tapping

Fig. 5b Contrasting orientations. *Equilibrium*.

Photo Courtesy. Suparna Banerjee



Fig. 6 Contrasting movements. *Equilibrium* (2007). Photo Courtesy. Iowa State Dance

Based on the above, we contend that both *Classic Frantic* and *Equilibrium* embody Bakhtin's hybridity by integrating rhythms and sounds from these two styles while simultaneously stressing the co-existence of independent voices. Nevertheless, their aesthetics and contents are different. The former employed call-and-response between the two forms for most of the time that revealed the differences but culminated with a symbol of a bridge, whereas the latter aimed for a more balanced interaction between Bharatanatyam and Tap movements through human connection. While *Classic Frantic* emphasizes the shock of cultural mixing, *Equilibrium* seeks harmony, using iconic symbols and myth to convey its message of

interdependence. Despite their differing approaches, both pieces underline the value of inclusion in artistic creations.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed how the cross-cultural pedagogical approach of integrating Tap and Bharatanatyam dances underpins the significance of double-voicedness and cultural hybridity in dance education. As a collaborative teaching practice, we created a dialogical space that allowed learners to navigate differences and led to a shared journey of empathy and discovery. Furthermore, we have revealed how the processes of learning and teaching two distinct dance forms have ushered in the emergence of a global dance form, Tap Natyam. Although the borrowings from both dance forms bridged the gap between tradition and newness in Tap Natyam, those experiences were not simple merging but fraught with complexities and challenges inherent in cross-cultural rhythmic exchanges. Implanting theory into practice, we have demonstrated that two choreographies under examination (*Classic Frantic* and *Equilibrium*) fit into Bakhtin's definition of intentional hybridity. Based on our findings, we recommend similar dance curricula in higher education that value diversity and accommodate learners' voices to improve the overall learning experience.

Notes

- i Banerjee appreciates having insightful conversations on several occasions with Avanthi Meduri on Homi Bhabha's hybridity at the University of Roehampton, London.
- ii Banerjee is grateful to (Guru) Sucheta Chapekar for sharing her knowledge of Bharatanatyam dance technique.
- iii Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUzfe2lxLVs>
- iv In Hindu iconography, the Nataraja (King of Dance) pose features the dancer standing on the right foot with the left raised, the right hand showing the *abhaya* (protection) gesture, and the left hand displaying the *gaja* (the elephant's trunk) position.
- v Hindu devotees chant this as a prayer to express their love for the deity Krishna.

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Embodied Innovation: Digital Dance Pedagogies and Sustainability

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Abstract

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, dance educators at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Department of Theatre and Dance reconceived performance and pedagogy to sustain creativity, wellbeing, and community. This chapter explores how virtual platforms enabled innovative practices in choreography, screendance, and online technique instruction. By embracing digital tools, faculty and students forged new pathways in dance education, reshaping curricula and expanding access to artistic expression. These adaptive strategies highlight the transformative potential of technological integration in performing arts pedagogy, offering insights into how imagination and creative resilience can be powerful catalysts for societal renewal and pedagogical futures.

Keywords

Virtual Performance; Screendance; Digitalization; Digital Dance Pedagogies

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted every sector of higher education, but for fields reliant on physical presence—such as dance—the challenges were profound. In March 2020, dance faculty worldwide confronted unprecedented questions: how do we teach an embodied art form in isolation? How do we maintain the vitality of embodied practice in digital space? At the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM), dance educators faced the immediate need to transform dance choreography, performance, and technique courses into digital spaces while sustaining the embodied, collaborative essence of dance. This article reflects on those pedagogical explorations. It situates the work within performance studies and dance

pedagogy, emphasizing how the crisis generated unexpected possibilities for creative adaptation.

Shifting Studio Practice to Digital Spaces

On March 18, 2020, The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) administration issued the following statement, "UH instruction will be conducted online for the remainder of the semester." And then on March 20, 2020, the university closed to the public. A statewide shutdown and stay-at-home order went into effect from March 23 – May 5, 2020. From this time forward, all the courses and performances in the UHM Department of Theatre and Dance were delivered online for one year through May 2021. From August – December 2021, a small subset of dance courses was taught in person or hybrid, with all performances being delivered as a virtual streaming event.

Dance pedagogy most often depends on shared physical presence, communal rhythm, and touch. With the move online, these foundations had to be reimagined. One of the greatest challenges to moving to online teaching was maintaining and cultivating an environment of positivity and enthusiasm. To address this in each of my classes I considered equity issues regarding students' access to digital devices. In many households, I found families sharing computers. I developed strategies to focus on the students and regularly check in on how they were feeling and the kind of support they might need in terms of emotional well-being and economic circumstances. Locally many of my students lived in multi-generational family dwellings and the health of their parents or grandparents was a primary concern. Many of the dancers had also lost their jobs or were living with families who had lost jobs so financial survival was taking precedence over their school work. To adapt to these circumstances, I switched some of my learning activities to include more asynchronous one on one instruction with possibilities for the students to record themselves dancing at home and post their movement on our course website rather than having to be physically present at set times with groups so they could attend to their individual family situations.

At UHM we strived to cultivate and maintain a safe learning environment for all. This was a great challenge for movement-based courses given the diversity of home-dwelling settings that each student inhabited. Dance is a physical practice. In Spring Semester 2021, one of my teaching assignments included an undergraduate contemporary dance course. For the first half of the semester I taught the movement classes from my living room in Hawai'i Kai, the accompanist Kenny Endo taught from his at-home Taiko Center of the Pacific studio, and all of the students were meeting from their dormitory rooms and homes. I converted my living and dining room into a dance studio by pushing back all of the furniture against the walls and setting up a computer and large tv. I ordered exercise mats and a 6 x 9 ft Marley floor online. I set up our family shoji screens to create a background and worked with my house lamps to

try to illuminate my body. Kenny set up a variety of mics at his home. Somehow with the 3 – 5 second time delay between his house and mine, we were able to be synchronous in sound and movement. While this was difficult, I realize my privilege as an educator in having space at home to be able to accommodate the virtual environment. The challenges of finding a workable space for the virtual dance class for the students were not so easeful. Many dancers had only 2 by 2 feet of room to move in at their dorms. Or, some students were taking the dance classes on zoom while their parents, siblings, partners, or spouses were cooking lunch three feet behind them because there was no other space in their living areas. Inviting students to go outside on zoom was not conducive because their computers could not hold a wireless connection and taking class on their phones created such a small screen that they couldn't see the movement exercises. The positive outcome was that our student body remained healthy during the quarantine, we updated technology equipment and gear to make movement courses happen, and students from outer islands were able to join the courses because we were online.

Throughout all of these different courses over the year, I found the course participants and I talked a lot about how their creativity was being formed by the changes and immediacy in their environments. Training for dancers is very much based on individual determination. We are each responsible for achieving the level of technique that we strive for in our dance practices. There were also some experiences that opened up such as the availability for our dancers to take workshops with other dance instructors around the globe as well as exploring all the digital media for dance that became quickly available online.

Teaching Strategies for Online Embodiment

If it wasn't for the pandemic, the Department of Theatre and Dance may not have tried to present virtual performance seasons. As dancers we come from a live background. When we put out a virtual performance, at least we know this is the best we can do at this time. What is important is that we like it. We value it. It is part of how we can continue to train our dancers and ourselves as educators and performers. There are five UHM Dance production examples that occurred during the pandemic that will be discussed below in the context of various strategies for digital pedagogy.

Strategy One: Gather and Share Dances on Social Media

In April 2020, I recognized our students and alumni needed to connect to one another during the isolation of stay-at-home order. Our dancers need to dance, stretch, turn, jump, and be creative. So, I asked our dance faculty to create prompts and put out a call for our dance instructors, undergraduate, and graduate students, alumni, and friends of UHM Dance to create one-minute uplifting dances for our social media pages. The digital pedagogy theme

was to choreograph prompts from daily life. The following call for posts was created by our dance faculty sent out to our dance lists:

CONNECTIONS PROJECT ON FACEBOOK

Uplifting Dances at a Gathering Online

UHM Dance Faculty, Lecturers, Undergraduate and Graduate Students, Alumni, and Friends of Dance: During this time of extreme adversity, we wish everyone great health and safety. Our hearts go out to all who are experiencing challenges or loss due to the pandemic. Dance has a great power to heal, to support, to inspire, and to connect us deeply to one another in person and across distances. For this reason, we invite you to join us in the creation of uplifting dances at a gathering online. How does it work? All you interested dance makers choose one of the themes below and respond by creating a video dance using your own imagination. Here are the prompts (select only one):

Make a dance....

In a doorway

Outside in the grass or under a tree

With your dog or cat

With a family member

Using only your hands, feet, or face

Incorporating kitchen percussion with pots, pans, spoons, or other items in your living space

By creating a costume or wearing everything in your closet

That honors the people you love

About courage, perseverance, or healing

In support of healthcare workers

These are one minute videos. We will combine all the videos and post on the UHM Dance Facebook page. We will also be sharing and highlighting a few videos weekly over the next month.

HOW:

Select one of the above themes and create your one-minute video dance response.

Submit in one week.

Identify your name with location and send a downloadable link (via google drive or another site)

Be well and we look forward to your creativity!

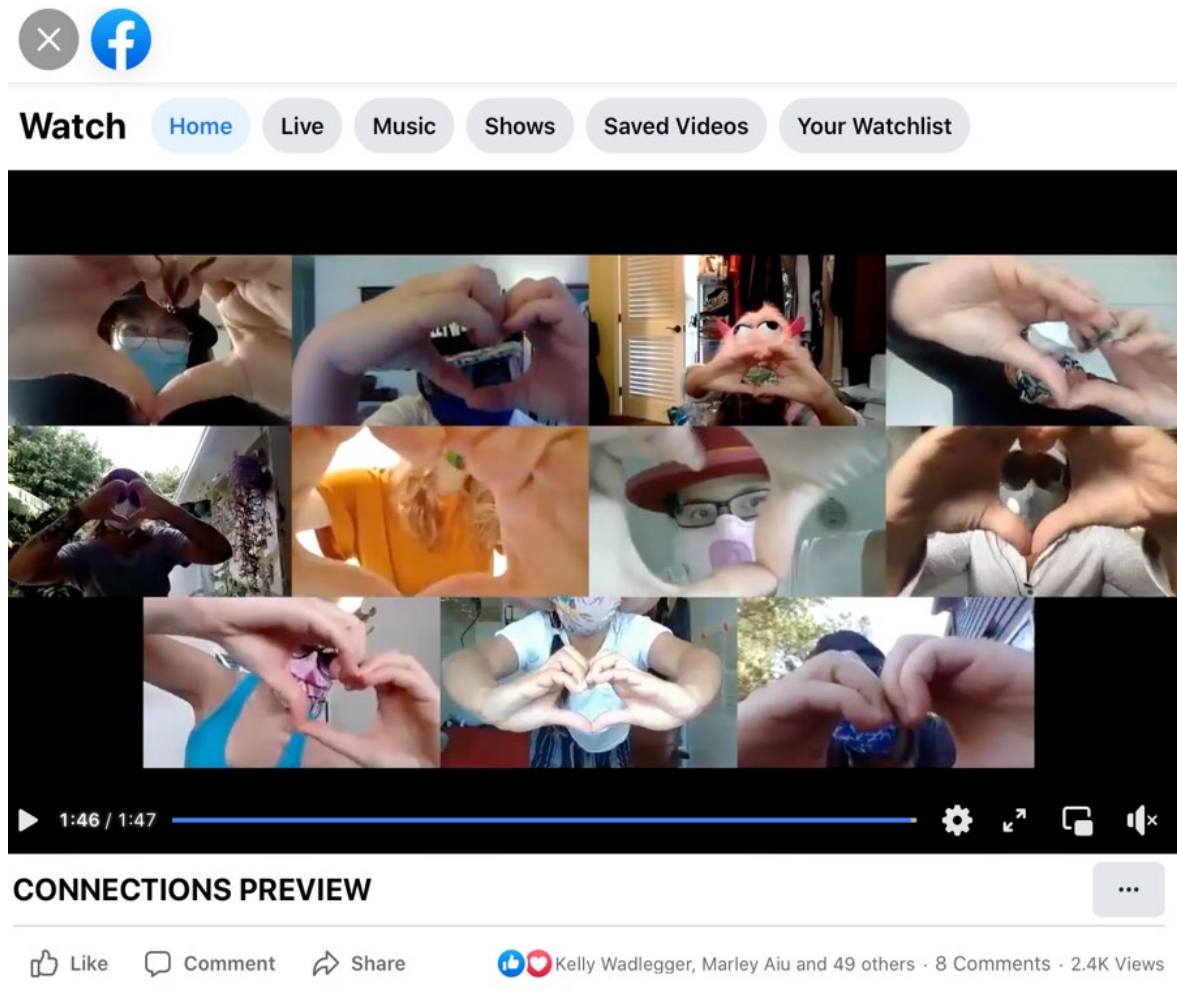


Fig. 1 Zoom Image Selected from the Preview of Connections

Dancers responded from across the US, Hawai'i, Japan, and India. We shared a full reveal of their videos, titles, and prompts with one dance a day for the entire month of May 2020. Clips of videos were submitted by: Rohini Acharya, Sami L. A. Akuna, Suparna Banerjee, Sai Bhatawadekar, Amy Bukarau, Sequoia Carr-Brown, Willow Chang, Dayna Chun, Chloe Groom, Katheryn Holt, Peter Rockford Espiritu, Charessa Frye, David Heller, Angana Jhaveri, Peiling Kao and Classes, Kay Linan, Tammy Metz, Jenny Mair, Meghan McKinnley, Kara Jhalak Miller and Classes, Jessica Orfe, Maya Ota, Michelle Painter, Amy Pivar, Catherine Restivo, Blythe Stephens, Tavehi Tafiti, Kelly Wadlagger, and Katelyn Wyatt.

Strategy Two: Invite Students to Become Self-Directed Learners

VIRTUAL DANCE PERFORMANCE ON SHOWTIX4U

Twice a year the UHM Dance program presents a student showcase called "Footholds." This production is an entirely student choreographed production with faculty mentorship. The dancers choreograph and perform their presentations. In 2020, our production changed from

the title “Footholds” to “Virtual Dance Performance” and the students created dance for camera and choreography for screendance. I directed our first student.

UHM Virtual Dance Performance online.

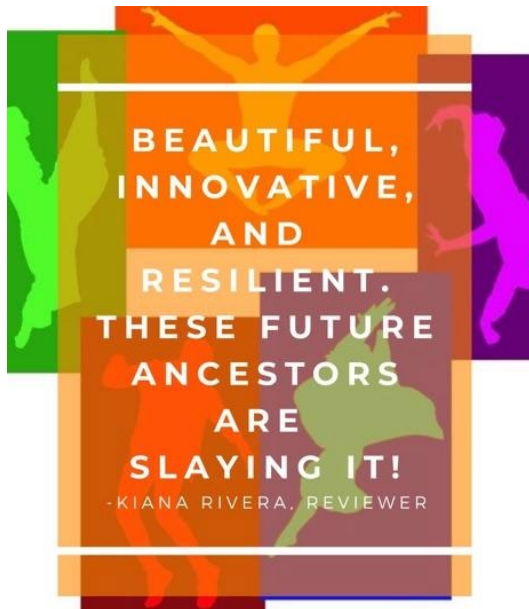


Fig. 2 Quote from a Review by Kiana Rivera of the Virtual Dance Performance

What is different from the pre-pandemic live stage performance is that our dancers had to be self-directed learners in many instances due to COVID-19. They were preparing more on their own than ever before. This was a challenge for the faculty in terms of making sure they were preparing correctly, safely, and answering any questions they have remotely. Experiences that are different from a live stage in person performance that involve self-directed learning include the following examples.

If the dancers are performing live for the broadcast, they consider the location of their performance so that they have a strong and consistent internet signal. One of the live stream performers was broadcasting from an outdoor parking lot and another from an open grassy lawn on campus. They had to be keenly aware of their environment while dancing and focusing on the camera. Costumes, props, lights, filming, editing, publicity, choreography, and performance coaching were all created by the students with remote mentoring by the dance faculty and staff.

Performers explored the use of natural light or light streaming through their windows instead of stage lighting. Often the dancers used props in their work with a faculty mentor who works with them on staging. In this case with remote mentorship, they had to be self-directed learners and consider their site location and scenery through a pre-production site visit. The choreographers had to consider not only their movement and choreography, but also spatial

choices in relation to where objects, architecture, lines, and forms are in the scene and what the scenery in the background communicates about their work. Some decided to use a virtual background and this brought up questions about the depth of view. Choreographically, they used their surroundings to tell a story about the location and considered movement choices in response to these environments instead of choreographing on a black-box stage. Within this experimentation with new media, however, the dance students placed emphasis primarily on the performance of the body, dancing, and choreography as the primary focus for this production.

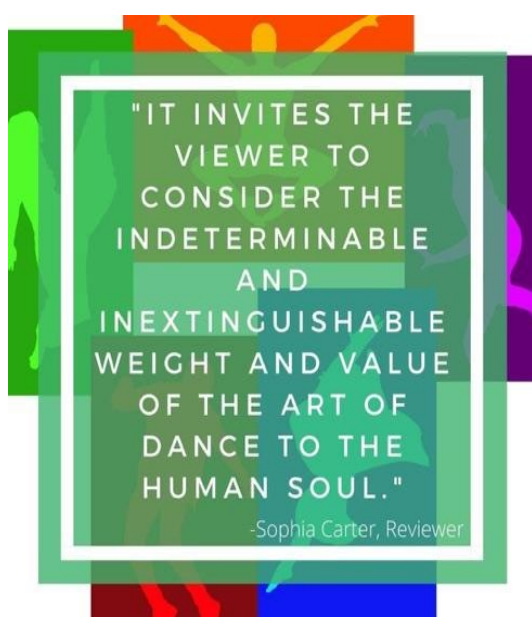


Fig. 3 Quote from a Review by Sophie Carter of the Virtual Dance Performance

In the Fall 2020 Virtual Dance Performance, the production included 25 performance elements. There were 5 live performances livestreamed and 20 short dances for camera screendance videos. In this broadcast, the live performance element involved a choreographer/dancer broadcasting via a phone or computer to zoom. A technical crew member sends the stream using OBS software to a ShowTix4U ticket site. The screendance videos include pre-edited and filmed Dance for Camera choreography.

Livestreaming dance performance has been around for over two decades and the Department of Theatre and Dance has presented very innovative live streaming dance in several previous productions in the Earle Ernst Lab Theatre and Kennedy Theatre since 2011. What was different about this show for our department was that the audience was fully online and the performers were creating entirely remotely. The student choreographers had to audition a solo, or, a digital ensemble of solo dancers on multiple zoom screens in separate spaces, or, a series of solos edited together as a dance film.



Fig. 4 Post Show Question and Answer Flyer with Student Choreographers

Strategy Three: Devise Time-Based Online Performance Installations

In December 2020, the UHM Dance Program encountered a challenge with our annual dance concert that is choreographed on students by our dance faculty. We were still required to have our courses and productions happen remotely online. We needed to train the dancers in performance.

Two productions emerged out of this dilemma. A dance installation on Instagram and a Dance Gallery Retrospective. The retrospective involved revisiting previous stage performances on a website. Dance alumni and audiences enjoyed revisiting and being inspired by memories of their previous dance productions. The IGTV installation was innovative in that it included live remote rehearsals and the release of the show was time-based. Below is the announcement about the installation:

UHM DANCE IGTV INSTALLATION PERFORMANCE

Our UHM Dance IGTV installation opens on Monday.

November 30 - December 7, 2020

1pm, 2pm, 3pm, 4pm, 5pm, 6pm

Performances daily with a live video release on the hour

Digital Content and Dance Makers:

Sai Bhatawadekar, Betsy Fisher, Peiling Kao, Kara Jhalak Miller, Lorenzo Perillo, and Amy Schiffner in collaboration with the UHM Dance undergraduate and graduate dancers.

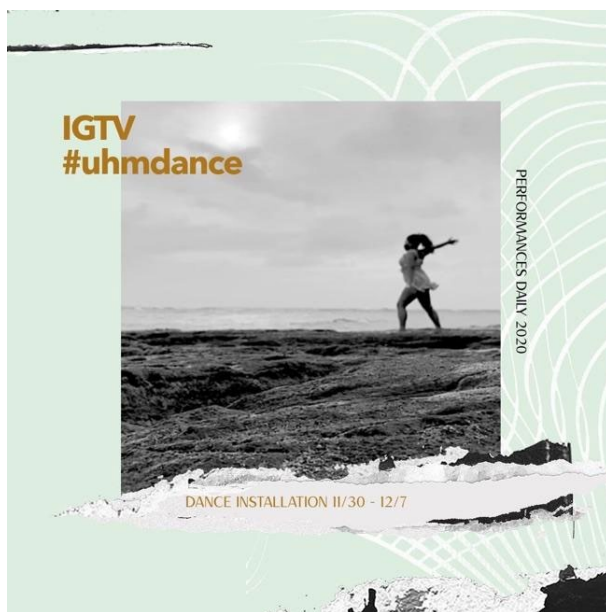


Fig. 5 UHM IGTV Installation Poster

The show was presented on an Instagram site that all the dance faculty had login access to and could post directly to. During the week of the dance installation, 1–3 minute videos were released by the faculty choreographer every day on the hour between 1pm and 6pm daily. The dance videos were intended to be raw with each choreographer having a different theme. The choreographers and dancers rehearsed remotely and each video was a solo created specifically for the student.

Strategy Four: Cultivate Dance Media Workshops, Artistic Presentations, and Panel Dialogue Discussions Virtually

DANCE MEDIA NOW PANEL

In Spring Semester 2021, I created and hosted a panel series called “Dance Media Now”. Hawai‘i is becoming a hub for dance media creation in the Pacific and the UHM Dance program has been instrumental in creating a vision for digital futures in performance.

The Dance Media Now Community Dialogue Project featured a panel conversation and presentation of artistic work with Hawai‘i-based dancers who incorporate media in their performance practice. The panel included Sami L.A. Akuna, Larry Asakawa, Kumu Lanakila Casupang, Peter Rockford Espiritu, Cheryl Flaherty, Kara Jhalak Miller, Camille Monson, Angela Sebastian, Kent Shinomae, and Kumu Vicky Holt Takamine. Dance graduate assistants Holly Chung and Katelyn Wyatt provided behind-the-scenes technical support of this broadcast and Kenny Endo shared recorded music for the pre-show.



Fig. 6 Dance Media Now Community Dialogue Project

The project created a platform for the creators to discuss their innovative approaches to performance during the pandemic. From their homes, the panelists discussed how they experienced the pandemic as artists, choreographers, teachers, and performers. They also discussed how they foresee dance media will continue to become woven into dance practices as a result of the forced COVID-19 virtual environments. Each of the dance artists gave a half-hour presentation of their choreography and their dance media work. Additionally, two different one-hour public panel conversations took place with four to five panelists each. All of these presentations were streamed live online and open to all Department of Theatre and Dance students and faculty, the larger university population at UHM, and to the public reaching audiences locally, nationally, and internationally.

The panelists came up with a brainstorming list that included questions, outcomes, and insights that they felt that virtual performance has provided them over the past year and a half.

Dance Media Now Panel Brainstorm List:

Questions:

Will there be a financial impact if some companies sell tickets online vs. others who give away concert logins for free?

How can dancers get creative so we don't allow the pandemic to suppress us as artists?

Do audiences know, or care, if a performance is livestreamed versus pre-recorded and edited?

How do you sustain programming online?

How important is the head and face in performance? Does performing with a mask change the perception or reception of the dance performance entirely?

The pandemic circumstances have:

Brought audiences to experience dance online in the home.

Introduced dancers to new streaming platforms like Youtube, Instagram, Twitch and Google drive.

Created an environment of experimentation for artists online.

Brings audiences to locations, into nature, where stories can be told visually in ways through screendance that cannot be presented on the stage

Created ideas for not going back to the way things were before in terms of teaching class and performing but instead always having a zoom, livestream, or broadcast preference during classes and performances.

Reached audiences that are more widespread, internationally, beyond our island.

Cultivated artist exchanges that are more financially viable because flight costs are not involved in online sharing.

Created a hybrid audience through virtual performance.

Revitalized previous work through On-Demand and access to video recordings and in the process of going from live to digital, the dance works have a longer life.

Provided front-row seating for everyone viewing virtual shows.

Created opportunities for new ways of presenting as dance companies can bypass traditional presenter costs and meet the audiences directly online.

Cultivated a Digital Presence where broadcasts may last a short period while the digital dance presence lasts forever and ever.

Strategy Five: Present a Livestreaming Performance Virtually with Multi-Cam Live Switching from the Stage

By November 2021, all Kennedy Theatre performances were delivered as a virtual streaming event. We emerged from our home dwellings and began to return to dancing together in person. The UHM Dance program presented our annual dance concert “Sphere” livestreaming from the Kennedy theatre stage and included three on-location dance films.

The production featured dances by UHM Dance faculty and local Hawai'i choreographers including Sai Bhatawadekar, Peter Rockford Espiritu, Peiling Kao, Kara Jhalak Miller, Lorenzo Perillo, Amy Schiffner, Yukie Shiroma, and Vicky Holt Takamine to create an imaginative and inspirational concert. Co-directed by Peiling Kao and Kara Jhalak Miller, Sphere is about holding our awareness in our realms of embodiment and showcasing how innovative creation processes emerge while exploring diverse choreographies and a wide range of dance genres.

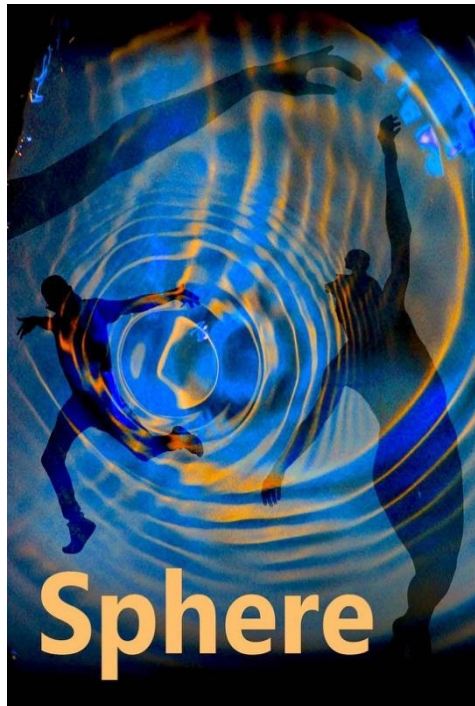


Fig. 7 Flyer for the Production of Sphere Directed by Peiling Kao and Kara Jhalak Miller

Dancers, choreographers, and crew were required to show proof of vaccine and be tested for COVID-19 regularly in order to participate in the show. There was no in-person audience in the theatre and Donard Sonada from 808 Video Productions broadcast a multi-camera production from Kennedy Theatre on the UHM campus.



Fig. 8 Behind the Scenes Livestream Multi-Camera Global Broadcast Switching of the Production of Sphere During a Rehearsal of the Dance Prana Imagination

My experience was surreal. Here we were, dancing together again on stage, and discovering new ways to transmit our performative energies through eight robotic cameras that were capturing the dance live to a viewing audience from around the world. I created a dance called “Prana Imagination” and choreographed small scenes throughout with the eye of the camera in mind, rather than the many eyes of a live in house audience. How this shaped my choreography was through making choices to develop small simultaneous scenes on stage so that any camera angle could share a glimpse of movement as it was made just for that perspective.

I had a cast of sixteen dancers, none of whom were all performing at the same time due to the requirement of not having more than nine dancers on stage at a time. I noticed that the students performed differently with more intention and vigor when they knew the cameras were broadcasting live than they did when they were only being pre-recorded. We successfully reached a wider local and international audience.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted every aspect of dance pedagogy and performance, yet it also catalyzed innovation. At the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, faculty, staff, and students embraced digital platforms to sustain creativity, support wellbeing, and reimagine community. By transforming kitchens into studios, Instagram into a stage, and livestream into a theatre, we discovered that dance—fundamentally an embodied art—can adapt and thrive in digital environments. By reframing limitations as creative constraints, students and faculty discovered new choreographic possibilities, cultivated digital literacies, and sustained community across distance.

Dance educators had to adapt in unprecedented ways, revealing both vulnerabilities and new opportunities. A key lesson was learning that flexibility is essential. Asynchronous assignments, varied assessment methods, and recognition of students’ lived realities proved critical for equitable pedagogy. Rather than diminishing embodiment, digital tools expanded the choreographic imagination, allowing dance to inhabit kitchens, dorm rooms, and social media feeds. At UHM we learned that communities can thrive online. Shared projects like *Connections* and panels like *Dance Media Now* sustained connection across isolation, demonstrating that digital platforms can nurture community as well as performance. Hybrid models hold promise. Productions like *Sphere* demonstrated how livestream and live performance can coexist, expanding audiences and extending the life of dance works. Moving forward, digital dance pedagogies should not be seen as temporary stopgaps but as generative practices that can coexist with live performance.

While dance will always value physical co-presence, the innovations developed during the pandemic should not be discarded. Digital practices expand the pedagogical and artistic

toolkit. For example, screendance assignments can continue alongside live choreography, offering students skills in media production. Online panels and concerts provide access to wider audiences and foster intercultural dialogue. In Hawai'i, where students often live across islands, hybrid practices increase inclusivity by reducing barriers of geography and travel. More broadly, these strategies align with creative sustainability, reducing reliance on physical infrastructure and enabling more equitable access.

Dance pedagogy, when confronted with disruption, can model resilience. The lessons of pandemic teaching remind us that dance is always more than movement in space: it is an embodied archive of adaptation, survival, and imagination. The resilience and creativity demonstrated during this crisis point toward a future in which digital and embodied practices are not opposed but intertwined. As dance education continues to evolve, the lessons learned during this period of upheaval remind us that adaptability, imagination, and care are essential to sustaining both art and community in uncertain times.

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Design and Invisible Crimes: Visual Protest and Critical Pedagogy in Rio de Janeiro

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Abstract

Design and Invisible Crimes: Visual Protest and Critical Pedagogy in Rio de Janeiro How can design education confront injustice and give voice to the silenced? On May 6, 2025, as part of an academic mission supported by Caixa Geral de Depósitos, a workshop entitled Design and Crime was held at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), engaging undergraduate and master's students in a hands-on, socially-driven design experiment. Developed in collaboration with Professor Fabiana Oliveira Heinrich, the session challenged students to uncover and expose “invisible crimes” — acts of violence, exploitation, or systemic neglect that persist on the margins of public perception. Issues such as structural racism, disguised femicide, slave-like labor, environmental injustice, and Indigenous rights violations became the focus of urgent, visual inquiry. Through the creation of protest posters using manual materials and direct visual language, students transformed the classroom into a temporary protest space. The final presentation took the form of a spontaneous “living demonstration,” fostering not only public engagement within the class but also a collective reflection on the power and responsibility of design. The workshop invited students to think critically, act visually, and design politically. It proposed design as an active tool for civic agency and ethical interrogation — a medium not only for communication, but for confrontation. By merging visual activism with experimental pedagogy, Design and Crime demonstrated how graphic design can operate as a space for dissent, dialogue, and social imagination.

Keywords

Visual Protest; Critical Pedagogy; Invisible Crimes; Design Activism and Participatory Learning

Introduction

Design is a practice embedded in cultural, social, and political dynamics. While it is often framed in terms of problem-solving, innovation, or service to industry, design also has a capacity for resistance, confrontation, and ethical engagement. At times of political turbulence, social injustice, or systemic inequality, design becomes a means of protest, a way of visualising dissent and amplifying marginalised voices.

This paper addresses the question: *How can design education confront injustice and give voice to the silenced?* The inquiry is grounded in the experience of a workshop titled *Design and Crime*, held on May 6, 2025, at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Organised in collaboration with Professor Fabiana Oliveira Heinrich and supported by Caixa Geral de Depósitos, the workshop invited undergraduate and master's students to engage in a hands-on design experiment. The session was premised on exposing “invisible crimes”: acts of violence, exploitation, or systemic neglect that are normalised within society but rarely framed as crimes.

The Brazilian context makes this inquiry especially urgent. Brazil is marked by sharp inequalities, persistent racial violence, systemic gendered oppression, and ecological devastation. Although these issues often appear in public debate, they are rarely addressed with the critical depth they demand. Many injustices are tolerated as part of the “normal” functioning of society, producing a paradox where the most damaging crimes are also the most invisible (Hillyard & Tombs, 2004).

In this context, design education can play a transformative role. By mobilising design as a critical and participatory tool, educators can foster civic awareness and empower students to become agents of change. The workshop in Rio de Janeiro demonstrated this potential by integrating critical pedagogy, visual protest, and participatory learning into a temporary but intense experiment.

This chapter expands on the workshop by situating it within broader theoretical debates and pedagogical practices. The discussion unfolds in four main sections. First, a literature review explores design activism, critical pedagogy, and the concept of invisible crimes. Second, the methods section provides a detailed account of the workshop's design, structure, and documentation. Third, findings analyse the themes, aesthetics, and outcomes of students' visual protests. Finally, the conclusion reflects on the implications for design education and proposes directions for future research.

By merging visual activism with critical pedagogy, the *Design and Crime* workshop exemplifies how design education can move beyond technical training toward ethical interrogation, civic engagement, and social imagination. It suggests that design should not only communicate but also confront, becoming a form of resistance and a medium of protest.

Literature Review

Design as Activism

The idea that design can intervene in social and political issues is not new. Victor Papanek's seminal book *Design for the Real World* (1971) challenged designers to reject purely commercial work and instead address pressing social problems. Papanek argued that design is inherently political, whether or not designers acknowledge it, because design choices shape societies and environments.

Later, Margolin and Margolin (2002) formalised this perspective in their proposal for a "social model" of design, emphasising the discipline's responsibility to tackle structural inequalities. They critiqued the market-driven orientation of design education and called for pedagogical frameworks that engage with real-world social needs. Similarly, Ezio Manzini (2015) argued that design activism plays a critical role in social innovation, particularly by fostering grassroots initiatives and empowering communities to reimagine futures.

Design activism often relies on immediacy, accessibility, and clarity. Posters, zines, and other forms of low-cost visual communication have historically been at the forefront of activist design. McQuiston (1993) documented how graphic agitation since the 1960s has been crucial to anti-war movements, feminist struggles, and anti-racist campaigns. What makes these artifacts powerful is not their refinement but their urgency: they aim to disrupt, provoke, and mobilise.

Within design research, scholars such as Dunne and Raby (2013) have broadened the scope by promoting speculative design, which challenges assumptions and invites debate about possible futures. While speculative design often operates in gallery or academic settings, activist design seeks direct engagement with publics, occupying streets, social media, or classrooms as sites of contestation.

In this lineage, the *Design and Crime* workshop situates itself in a tradition of socially engaged design. It frames design not as neutral communication but as confrontation, a means of exposing systemic injustices and amplifying suppressed voices.

Critical Pedagogy and Design Education

The pedagogical dimension of the workshop draws heavily on critical pedagogy, most famously articulated by Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). Freire denounced the "banking model" of education, where students are treated as passive recipients of knowledge, and instead advocated for a dialogical model in which learners become co-creators of meaning. Education, in Freire's view, is never neutral: it either reinforces domination or fosters liberation.

Henry Giroux (2004) extended this framework by situating education within the broader struggle for democracy. He argued that classrooms must become spaces where students critically interrogate power relations and envision alternatives. Applied to design education, this perspective suggests that teaching should not be confined to technical skill acquisition but must cultivate political literacy and ethical reflection.

Several design educators have embraced this critical pedagogical turn. Armstrong et al. (2014) proposed that design education must explicitly engage with social and political contexts, preparing students not just as professionals but as citizens. Similarly, Tunstall (2013) argued for “decolonising design,” urging educators to address issues of race, power, and global inequality.

Workshops like *Design and Crime* embody these principles by transforming the classroom into a site of protest and dissent. Rather than producing polished artifacts for assessment, students engaged in urgent, collective action. The workshop thus blurred the line between pedagogy and activism, treating education itself as a political practice.

Invisible Crimes and Criminological Perspectives

The concept of “invisible crimes” originates in critical criminology, which emphasises that much harm in society is unrecognised or under-criminalised. While mainstream criminology often focuses on street crime, critical scholars such as Steven Box (1983) and Hillyard & Tombs (2004) have drawn attention to the “crimes of the powerful”, corporate exploitation, state violence, and environmental destruction. These harms are often normalised by law or obscured by dominant ideologies, rendering them invisible to public scrutiny.

Applying this framework to design suggests that one of the discipline’s roles is to make invisible crimes visible. Design can highlight hidden structures of violence, from precarious labour conditions to ecological degradation, by transforming abstract injustices into tangible, communicable forms.

In Brazil, the relevance of this framework is stark. The country has one of the highest rates of femicide in the world (Waiselfisz, 2015), widespread racialised police violence (Almeida, 2019), and ongoing environmental devastation, particularly in the Amazon. Many of these issues are not recognised as “crimes” in the legal sense but constitute systemic harms that disproportionately affect marginalised communities. By framing these issues as invisible crimes, the workshop invited students to adopt a critical criminological lens and to deploy design as a tool of exposure and protest.

Methods

The *Design and Crime* workshop was conceived as a pedagogical experiment that merged design education, participatory action research, and activist practice. The methodology was not limited to teaching techniques but aimed to test how design could operate as both inquiry and intervention.

Workshop Context and Setting

The workshop took place on May 6, 2025, at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), a public institution historically engaged with political debates and artistic experimentation. UFRJ has long been a site of cultural resistance, especially during Brazil's military dictatorship (1964–1985), when students and intellectuals used art and design to critique authoritarian rule (Caldeira, 2012). Holding the workshop in this context provided a symbolic connection to earlier struggles for democracy and civil rights.

The event was part of an academic mission supported by Caixa Geral de Depósitos, which sought to promote cross-cultural collaboration between Portugal and Brazil. Collaboration with Professor Fabiana Oliveira Heinrich, herself an advocate for socially engaged pedagogy, was essential for grounding the session in local realities.

Participants

Twenty-five students took part: eighteen undergraduates in Communication Design and seven master's students in Visual Arts and Education. Participants had varying levels of technical expertise, but all were familiar with basic visual communication practices. Importantly, many students came from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds, which enriched discussions around injustice and invisibility.

Pedagogical Framework

The workshop was guided by three interrelated pedagogical principles:

1. Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 1970): Students were positioned as co-investigators of social reality. Rather than imposing themes, facilitators encouraged participants to identify injustices that resonated with their lived experiences.
2. Participatory Action (Fals Borda, 1991): The workshop was structured as collective inquiry leading to collective action. Knowledge production and activist practice were intertwined, dissolving the boundary between reflection and doing.
3. Design as Protest (McQuiston, 1993; Dunne & Raby, 2013): Students were encouraged to see design not as neutral communication but as an expressive and

confrontational tool. Emphasis was placed on immediacy, clarity, and emotional impact.

Materials and Tools

A deliberate decision was made to use manual and low-cost materials: paper, paint, markers, stencils, collage scraps, rather than digital media. This served several purposes:

- Accessibility: Every participant could contribute regardless of digital skill level.
- Embodiment: The act of cutting, painting, or printing emphasised the bodily labour of protest.
- Historical Resonance: Manual poster-making linked the workshop to traditions of analog protest, from 1968 Paris to Brazilian *lambe-lambe* street posters.

Structure of the Workshop

The session lasted four hours and unfolded in three phases:

Critical Inquiry (1 hour)

- Students brainstormed and mapped examples of “invisible crimes” in Brazilian society.
- Discussions highlighted systemic racism, femicide, exploitative labor, environmental harm, and Indigenous rights.

Facilitators introduced the criminological concept of “crimes of the powerful” (Box, 1983), providing a framework for thinking about visibility and invisibility.

Visual Experimentation (2 hours)

- Working individually or in small groups, students produced protest posters.
- They experimented with typography, symbolism, and color to distill complex injustices into clear visual messages.
- Drafts were pinned to the walls for collective feedback, encouraging iteration and dialogue.

Living Demonstration (1 hour)

- Students staged a spontaneous classroom protest. Posters were displayed across the room, and slogans were voiced collectively.
- The action blurred the line between pedagogy and activism: the classroom became a temporary public square.

Documentation and Data Collection

The workshop was documented in three ways:

1. Field Notes by facilitators, capturing observations of discussions, processes, and atmosphere.
2. Photographic Records of posters and the final demonstration.
3. Student Reflections, collected through short written statements at the end of the session, in which participants articulated what they learned and how they felt.

These materials formed the basis for analysing the workshop's outcomes, particularly in relation to themes of justice, protest aesthetics, and pedagogical transformation.

Findings

The findings of the workshop can be grouped into four dimensions: the issues identified, the visual languages adopted, the pedagogical outcomes, and the broader implications for design education.

Exposing Invisible Crimes

Students collectively identified and visually represented a spectrum of systemic harms.

1. Structural Racism
A poster depicted the routine violence faced by Afro-Brazilians, particularly in favelas, where police killings are disproportionately high (Almeida, 2019).
2. Femicide and Gender Violence
Brazil has one of the world's highest femicide rates (Waiselfisz, 2015). Students represented this through stark imagery. These works critiqued the normalisation of violence against women and the failure of state institutions to provide protection.
3. Slave-like Labour and Economic Exploitation
Some posters addressed modern slavery in Brazil's rural and urban sectors.
4. Environmental Injustice
Posters highlighted the devastation of the Amazon and the impact of mining on local communities.
5. Indigenous Rights Violations
A recurring theme was the dispossession of Indigenous lands.

Together, these issues demonstrated that students were not only aware of systemic injustices but also capable of reframing them as crimes that demand accountability.

The Aesthetics of Protest

The posters adopted visual strategies common in protest cultures:

- **Bold Typography:** Hand-drawn letters, often in black or red, conveyed urgency.
- **Symbolic Imagery:** Chains, flames, tears, and silhouettes distilled complex issues into iconic forms.
- **Contrast and Minimalism:** Many designs relied on stark contrasts, echoing the aesthetics of street posters and stencil graffiti.
- **Collective Authorship:** The wall display created a visual chorus, amplifying collective voices.

The immediacy of manual production allowed for imperfection, which itself carried authenticity. As McQuiston (1993) noted, protest design thrives on urgency rather than polish.

Pedagogical Outcomes

Three key learning outcomes emerged:

1. **Critical Awareness**
Students reported that the workshop deepened their understanding of systemic injustice. One participant wrote: “I always knew about femicide, but calling it an invisible crime changed how I see it, as something normalised but intolerable.”
2. **Collective Agency**
The collaborative atmosphere fostered solidarity. Participants emphasised that creating and protesting together gave them a sense of power often absent in conventional classrooms.
3. **Embodied Protest**
The performative aspect of the living demonstration transformed students from designers into activists, even if temporarily. Several reflected that shouting slogans with their peers felt like a rehearsal for real-world protest.

Design as Civic Agency

The workshop demonstrated that design education can extend beyond technical instruction into the realm of civic practice. Students experienced design as a form of ethical confrontation, capable of exposing hidden injustices and mobilising collective reflection.

This aligns with Manzini’s (2015) argument that design activism enables “small, local, open, and connected” interventions that resonate beyond the classroom. By reframing design as a practice of dissent, the workshop empowered students to imagine themselves as political actors.

Discussion

The *Design and Crime* workshop demonstrated that design education can become a site of political engagement and ethical inquiry. While the immediate outcomes were student posters and a staged demonstration, the deeper significance lies in how the workshop reframed design itself: not as a service to industry or aesthetics, but as a medium of confrontation, dissent, and collective imagination.

Challenging the Myth of Neutrality

Design is often portrayed as a neutral discipline concerned primarily with problem-solving and functionality. Yet scholars have repeatedly contested this myth. Papanek (1971) insisted that design choices are never neutral, since every object, visual, or system contributes to shaping social realities. Similarly, Fry (2009) argued that design has “defuturing” potential, it can contribute to unsustainable or unjust systems if left unexamined.

The workshop in Rio de Janeiro foregrounded this reality. By asking students to identify “invisible crimes,” it highlighted how injustices are themselves designed into social systems: from discriminatory policing practices to exploitative labor arrangements. In making posters, students revealed how visual design can both conceal and expose harm. The exercise therefore destabilised the idea of neutrality, underscoring design’s political nature.

Protest as Pedagogy

The use of protest as a pedagogical method aligns with critical pedagogy’s emphasis on praxis, the combination of reflection and action (Freire, 1970, p. 14-15). In staging a living demonstration, students did not merely represent protest; they embodied it. This performative aspect resonates with hooks’ (1994, p. 21) call for engaged pedagogy, in which learning is experiential, embodied, and transformative.

Classrooms are typically structured spaces of control, hierarchy, and assessment. Transforming such a space into a site of protest disrupted these dynamics. Students temporarily occupied the classroom as activists, not just learners. This blurring of roles challenges traditional educational models, suggesting that design pedagogy can integrate activism not only as content but as method.

The Brazilian Context

Brazil provides a particularly resonant backdrop for this experiment. The country has a rich tradition of visual protest, from *lambe-lambe* posters plastered across city walls to the graphic interventions of Tropicália artists in the 1960s and 1970s (Favaretto, 1996). Contemporary social movements such as MTST (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Teto) and Indigenous

groups have continued this tradition by using banners, graffiti, and viral images to demand visibility.

By situating the workshop within this context, students were not only engaging in a classroom exercise but connecting to a broader lineage of Brazilian protest design. Their posters echoed a long-standing visual vocabulary of dissent, one that resonates deeply in a society where public space has historically been a battleground for rights.

Comparative Perspectives

The outcomes of the workshop also resonate with international examples of design activism. For instance, the posters of the 1968 Paris uprisings, produced by Atelier Populaire, similarly emphasised immediacy, collective authorship, and urgency (McQuiston, 1993). More recently, the *Occupy Wall Street* movement (2011) and climate justice campaigns such as *Fridays for Future* have relied heavily on hand-made, visually striking protest graphics to amplify their demands.

What distinguishes the *Design and Crime* workshop is the pedagogical frame: it was not an organic movement, but a structured educational intervention that simulated protest to foster learning. This positions it at the intersection of activism and pedagogy, a hybrid practice where the goals are both political (exposing injustice) and educational (cultivating critical awareness).

Design, Crime, and Ethics

By explicitly linking design to the concept of “crime,” the workshop introduced an unusual but generative framing. Crime is typically associated with illegality, but criminologists have long argued that law itself reflects power relations and that many systemic harms are normalised or legalised (Hillyard & Tombs, 2004). Applying this perspective to design suggests that design can be complicit in reproducing invisible crimes, for example, advertising industries that perpetuate gender stereotypes or packaging designs that obscure exploitative supply chains.

At the same time, design can challenge these harms by making them visible. Posters about femicide, deforestation, or Indigenous rights exemplify how design can reframe normalised practices as intolerable crimes. This ethical dimension is crucial: design education should not merely train professionals but cultivate responsible, politically literate citizens (Margolin & Margolin, 2002).

Pedagogical Implications

Several implications for design education emerge from this experiment:

1. Curriculum Integration: Courses should incorporate social justice themes alongside technical training. Design schools risk irrelevance if they ignore the political dimensions of practice.
2. Experiential Learning: Hands-on, participatory workshops can foster deeper engagement than purely theoretical instruction. The immediacy of protest-making created memorable, embodied learning experiences.
3. Cross-Cultural Collaboration: The workshop demonstrated the value of international collaboration. Bringing perspectives from Portugal into dialogue with Brazilian realities enriched the pedagogical experience.
4. Design as Research: The workshop functioned not only as teaching but as research into how design can expose invisible crimes. This suggests that classrooms can serve as laboratories for socially engaged design inquiry.

Conclusion

The *Design and Crime* workshop at UFRJ illustrated how design education can be reimagined as a space of protest, confrontation, and ethical inquiry. By exposing invisible crimes, students engaged in design not as a neutral practice but as civic agency. Three central insights emerge:

1. Design as Exposure: Design can render visible what is hidden, reframing normalized harms as crimes that demand accountability.
2. Pedagogy as Protest: Integrating protest into the classroom disrupts traditional hierarchies, empowering students as political actors and co-creators of knowledge.
3. Education as Civic Agency: Design education, when oriented toward justice, prepares students not only as professionals but as citizens capable of ethical confrontation.

While the workshop was temporary, its implications are enduring. It points to the need for design curricula that integrate critical pedagogy, socially engaged practice, and activist methodologies. Future research might explore digital extensions of such workshops, longitudinal impacts on students, or comparative studies across cultural contexts.

Ultimately, the experiment affirms that design is never neutral. It always participates in shaping the social order, either reinforcing injustice or challenging it. By merging design, crime, and pedagogy, the workshop urged students to choose the latter path: to design not only for communication, but for confrontation; not only for markets, but for justice.

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Smooth Surfaces, Fast Images: Aesthetic Education in the Age of Instagram, AI, and Canva

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Abstract

In an increasingly visual media culture, a streamlined aesthetic gains power - marked by slickness, standardization and instant gratification. Platforms such as Instagram, brand style systems, and tools like Canva or AI image generators disseminate a consumable visual language and shift art lessons from experiential making to the assembly of templates. This article analyses how contemporary design practices oscillate between self-design and aesthetic adaptation. It asks to what extent AI-supported creation fosters uniformity and what this means for emancipatory, critical art education. By connecting media theory and didactics, the paper clarifies the tension between technical feasibility and aesthetic formation and proposes classroom strategies that foreground judgment, reflection, and resistance to platform logics.

Keywords

Digital Image Culture; Surface Aesthetics; Creativity; Standardization

Introduction: The Aesthetics of the Digital

In an increasingly visually dominated media culture, the understanding of aesthetics is shifting: less as an expression of form, criticism, or originality, and more as a product of standardized interfaces, filter-supported image worlds, and algorithmically optimized design. Debord (1967) already described images as central media of social organization in his *Society of the Spectacle* - a diagnosis that continues in the platform logic of digital media. Platforms such as Instagram shape a visual language of "smoothness" that focuses on standardization,

efficiency, and immediate connectivity. Lev Manovich (2016) describes this phenomenon as “Instagramism,” a globally effective paradigm that privileges atmosphere and surface aesthetics and largely ignores context.

This “self-made” practice of unconscious design is becoming increasingly prevalent in everyday life. While it opens up new possibilities for participation, it loses depth, creative drive, and differentiation. This is evident in the design of everyday products, from sugar packets in coffee houses to advertising brochures and posters. Design increasingly appears here as a consumable service: tools such as Canva or AI systems standardize and optimize visual acts, often at the expense of critical reflection and aesthetic independence.

This is precisely where the challenge for aesthetic education lies: it navigates the tension between a culture of standardized surfaces and the aspiration to convey design as an open process of experience, reflection, and criticism. In the following, Lev Manovich's concept of Instagramism is used to introduce an initial paradigm that exemplifies the logic of surface aesthetics.

Instagramism: The Aesthetics of the Algorithm

Lev Manovich describes “Instagramism” as a hybrid aesthetic between design, photography, and digital culture. In this context, Tifentale (2015) demonstrates historical continuity by comparing Kodak cameras and Instagram as technologies that democratize image production on a massive scale - albeit at the expense of aesthetic depth. Typical features include flat spaces, pastel color palettes, central perspective, repetition, and a focus on mood. Visibility thus becomes the central capital: a new class of “aesthetic workers” optimizes their self-presentation according to platform-specific rules (Manovich, 2016).

This dynamic is not just a fashionable stylistic phenomenon, but forms a socio-aesthetic code that organizes belonging, recognition, and economic capital. In the context of digital image cultures, this creates a logic of permanent production, self-optimization, and activity. In *Vita Contemplativa*, Byung-Chul Han (2022) diagnoses the real problem of our present not in lack, but in “too much activity” (p. 17). Images are no longer produced out of contemplation, but out of the compulsion to be constantly present.

For aesthetic education, this represents a fundamental shift: design risks becoming a mere reproduction of platform codes. Critical art education, on the other hand, should open up spaces where the focus is not on the rapid production of images, but on the question of why and what for design exists. Contemplation, understood as productive pause, can serve as a counterweight to the constant production of stimuli.

At the same time, it becomes clear that this surface logic is not only evident on a large scale in platforms, but also in the everyday micro-decisions of digital design, especially in tools such as Canva or AI generators.

Microstructural Decisions

Design platforms such as Canva and AI generators provide low-threshold access to image design. However, this democratization also means standardization: grids, templates, and presets form a uniform visual language. Subjective creativity takes a back seat, while operational adaptability comes to the fore. Design breaks down into microstructural decisions whose aesthetic effect is already preprogrammed: “Choose a template, add your photo, adjust the font size.” Lev Manovich describes this as an ambivalent process of “self-design”: scope for self-empowerment goes hand in hand with standardization of aesthetics and behavior.

According to Billmayer (2025), contemporary visual culture is characterized by “fast images”: instantly consumable, mass-distributed. Han (2015) diagnoses this as an “aesthetic of smoothness” that avoids resistance: “The smooth has no depth. It does not invite you to linger” (p. 9). Both positions mark a reduction in aesthetic risk and promote visual uniformity.

Everyday practices clearly illustrate this: selfies and purikura function as identity work (Billmayer, 2025, pp. 22–24), while “food porn” emphasizes self-expression over information (Rützler, 2016). Schroeder (2013) describes this dynamic as “snapshot aesthetics” - a strategy that places images between spontaneous authenticity and calculated staging. AI generators reinforce such tendencies as a playful leisure activity. In Hans' terms, one could speak of affirmative beauty. Pedagogically, Šklovskij's (1984) principle of “defamiliarization” gains importance here as a deliberate counter-principle to smoothness. Similarly, McCarthy (n.d.) understands art as a form of “hacking” – as breaking open closed systems. Zawinski (n.d.) puts it more bluntly: “Professionalism has no place in art, and hacking is art.” Both perspectives mark art as a resistant practice against standardization and professionalization.

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This logic is also evident in communication: images often create connection rather than content, and are therefore phatic (Malinowski, 1923). Empirical evidence confirms that emotionally simple content engages people more than complex content (Berriche & Altay, 2020; Al Zaman, 2023). Advertising, in turn, works specifically with affective codes (Kroeber-Riel, 1993). At the same time, the use of images remains culturally framed: even photography can intensify experiences (Diehl et al., 2016).

From a didactic perspective, this does not mean devaluing “fast images,” but rather sensitizing learners to their codes. A distinction should be made between reproduced patterns and independent design. Alienation offers a method for making the difference between code and expression visible and critically reflecting on image functions (phatic, affective, multimodal). The discussion thus ties in with concepts of “critical visual literacy,” which Schieble (2014) emphasizes as a central goal of reflective media education. This gives rise to the kind of media literacy that strengthens aesthetic independence and counteracts pressure to conform (Billmeyer, 2018, 2025).

It is precisely this diagnosis that highlights the need to identify concrete ways of critical aesthetic education that not only describe the logic of fast images, but also apply it productively.

Opportunities for Critical Aesthetic Education

Precisely because digital platforms standardize design, they open up great potential for aesthetic education that aims at reflection, deconstruction, and reinterpretation. Instead of banning fast images, the aim is to make their logic visible and empower learners to use them critically. Beyond standardization, digital tools simultaneously open up autonomous spaces of possibility. On the one hand, hybrid practices foster the creative intertwining of analogue and digital procedures (Gauntlett, 2011). On the other hand, new forms of participatory and collaborative design emerge - whether in networked learning communities or activist image practices - that deliberately employ digital aesthetics against hegemonic norms (Jenkins, Ito, & boyd, 2016). From this perspective, digital design does not appear merely as a loss of aesthetic depth but rather as a resource for empowerment, collective creativity, and innovative learning arrangements.

Five strategies are central to this:

1. Comparative analysis: Algorithmically generated images are juxtaposed with classic photographs or works of art. This allows for discussion of how aesthetics, function, and context differ.

2. Aesthetic experiments: Using the same tools, templates, filters, and AI, students create non-conformist, subversive, or ironic image series. Design becomes a critical game.
3. Slowing down the process: The physical and material dimensions of design are deliberately brought to the fore. Methods such as aesthetic inquiry or embodied reflection (Ryan, 2014; Martikainen et al., 2021) can strengthen contemplation in contrast to platform logic.
4. Platform criticism and interface analysis: Likes, algorithms, and the attention economy are addressed as design factors. This allows for reflection on the social functions of images, between relationship maintenance and aesthetic experience.
5. Narrative deepening: Visual storytelling, photographic series, or performative image practices expand the fast image. This gives rise to forms that go beyond atmospheric surfaces.

The educational task is not to devalue visual codes, but to make them negotiable through analysis and contextualization. In this way, learners can see behind the logic of smooth surfaces and learn about criteria of technical and design quality. On the other hand, it becomes clear that images fulfill social functions that must be critically reflected upon. This creates media literacy that promotes aesthetic independence and at the same time sharpens awareness of the cultural embedding of digital images.

But beyond the question of mediation, this also brings the political dimension of design into focus, visible in the tension between self-design and algorithmic standardization.

Self-design and Algorithmic Standardization: The Politics of Aesthetics

In the digital age, our understanding of aesthetics is undergoing a fundamental shift. Platforms such as Instagram, Canva, and AI image generators are making images faster, more accessible, and more dependent on algorithms. Design is increasingly emerging not from individual processes, but from the variation of prefabricated templates, filters, and parameters. Aesthetics thus becomes a question of feasibility and efficiency.

Byung-Chul Han (2015) describes this development as the “aesthetics of smoothness”: beauty is reduced to smooth surfaces, while resistance and difference recede into the background. Lev Manovich's concept of “Instagramism” refers to the same tendency: expression and interpretation give way to harmony and recognizability. What becomes visible is a feel-good aesthetic that creates cultural conformity and avoids ruptures.

The consequences for aesthetic education are considerable. Learners grow up in visual worlds that privilege conformity and marginalize differences. Platforms such as Canva reinforce this by generating formally “correct” designs at the touch of a button. The open process of drafting and doubt is replaced by quick selection, which poses a risk to the development of judgment. Philosophical traditions make clear how central this ability is: Kant (1790/2000) understands judgment as a connection between the particular and the general, Hegel (1835/1975) as a form of moral subjectivity, and Benjamin (1935/1969) warned against the loss of aura in the age of technical reproducibility.

Social theory approaches complement the diagnosis: Habermas (1981) sees judgment as the result of communicative processes; aesthetic judgments must be negotiated discursively. Bourdieu (1979/1984) shows that they always also mark social codes that regulate belonging and distinction. Platform aesthetics are therefore not neutral, but organize visibility and recognition.

For art education, this means that digital tools should not be rejected, but rather their logic should be revealed. The focus on “perfect results” can itself become a learning opportunity: key questions such as “Who decides what is beautiful?”, “Which images become visible?” or “What role do algorithms play?” open up spaces for reflection. Resistance, irritation, and imperfection are not deficits in this context, but central components of aesthetic experience.

Understood in this way, art education in the digital age has a dual task: on the one hand, it must protect against flattening through algorithmic standardization; on the other hand, it must integrate digital tools into critical processes. By roughening up the smooth, slowing down the fast, and opening up the finished, spaces are created in which aesthetic experience does not end in complacency, but leads to critical self- and world appropriation. This connects the phenomenon of self-design with another area of tension: that between autonomy and conformity.

Between Autonomy and Conformity: Self-design as a Neoliberal Practice

Today, design is an everyday practice for millions of users. Instagram feeds, Canva presentations, and AI-generated portraits embody what Lev Manovich (2017) describes as “self-design”: the visual staging and optimization of the self using digital design tools. Identity is not discovered, but constructed through interfaces, influencer aesthetics, and brand logic.

In neoliberal image cultures, self-design appears as a form of self-optimization. Profiles, images, and stories are measured by likes, views, and follower counts. Byung-Chul Han (2013) interprets this as “digital self-exploitation”: subjects believe they are realizing themselves while exhausting themselves in the competition for visibility. Canva or Instagram suggest

creative freedom, but templates and presets create grids that channel creativity. Manovich (2017) speaks of “platform aesthetics”; design means less free invention than correct operation of the interface. In Bourdieu's terms (1979/1984), aesthetic decisions thus become rule-compliant actions in a social field in which symbolic capital such as visibility can only be attained through conformity.

Alongside the risks of standardization and digital self-exploitation, it should not be overlooked that platforms such as Instagram can also open up productive spaces. Young people do not use them exclusively for self-optimization but also for empowerment, community building, and the creation of counter-images to hegemonic norms (Harris & Bardey, 2019; Fardouly et al., 2015). From this perspective, digital image practices appear not only as expressions of neoliberal adaptation but also as potentials for participation and creative appropriation. Concepts of *participatory culture* (Jenkins, 2006) highlight that digital media simultaneously provide spaces for collective creativity and alternative visibility. A differentiated analysis must therefore take both dimension - adaptation as well as resistance - equally into account.

This has consequences for educational contexts: students increasingly learn that good design is the “right” decision within the framework of given options, not the invention of new paths. Doubt, emptiness, and openness threaten to disappear. Han (2015) reminds us: “The smooth is without resistance. It does not invite lingering” (p. 9). Art education must therefore create spaces for resistance and pause.

At the same time, self-design also opens up opportunities. Especially for marginalized groups, it can enable visibility and counter-images (cf. Harris & Bardey, 2019; Fardouly et al., 2015). The decisive factor is whether self-design unreflectively follows platform norms or is consciously used as a means of expression. Key questions such as:

- “Who am I in this image, expression, or cliché?”
- “Why do I choose this style, trend, or attitude?”
- “Who am I designing for, who am I including or excluding?”

show how aesthetic practice can become a field of reflection. Critical aesthetic education must therefore not be limited to “beautiful” results, but must make self-design visible as a process of becoming a subject and engaging with power, beyond smooth surfaces.

This raises the question of how these theoretical considerations can be translated into concrete didactic strategies.

Didactic Strategies for Critical Aesthetic Education

In order to render the didactic implications sustainable, it is necessary to take into account empirical findings on the actual practices of young people. Studies indicate an ambivalent use

of digital image platforms: on the one hand, dominant trends and beauty norms are reproduced; on the other hand, adolescents also develop subversive or resistant practices that foster social belonging and empowerment (Döring, Reif, & Pöschl, 2016; Mascheroni, Vincent, & Jimenez, 2015). An art-educational perspective that builds upon these empirically observable tensions avoids a purely normative critique and enhances the relevance of the proposed strategies to learners' realities.

Creativity is considered a key competence in education, economics, and society. But in the age of Canva, Instagram, and AI, creativity itself is in danger of becoming standardized: "Creative" often means producing quickly connectable content rather than opening up new aesthetic avenues. Design tools are becoming more powerful, but at the same time more tightly pre-structured by interface logic. The question for art education is therefore: How can we design critically under these conditions?

A look at architecture illustrates this tension. Architecture is not only a matter of individual genius, but a result of social, economic, and ecological conditions (Weinlich, 2019). As can be seen in digital design tools such as Navisworks (a CAD architecture program), we ourselves become the material within the computer program (Weinlich, 2019). Designs never arise in a vacuum, but are shaped by technical standards, economic optimizations, and ecological requirements. Digital platforms illustrate something similar: design is always embedded in social and technical grids.

This creates a tension in teaching: on the one hand, there is a risk of reduction to standardized interfaces, while on the other hand, there is potential to make these codes visible. Emancipatory approaches (Adorno, Rancière) emphasize that aesthetic education is not absorbed into the product, but must reflect the conditions of perception and design. Three didactic orientations can be derived from this:

Deconstruction instead of decoration: analysis of visual codes (e.g., filters, trends, beauty standards).

Reflection instead of reproduction: design as a biographical or social practice, for example through visual essays or diaries.

Ambiguity instead of clarity: works that raise questions and reveal contradictions, for example through ironic posters or experimental logos.

Understood in this way, critical aesthetic education not only strengthens technical skills, but also judgment, discernment, and resistance. Every design is political because it organizes visibility and reproduces or disrupts orders. The task of schools is to create learning spaces in which students understand design not only as a craft skill, but as a way of thinking, as an opportunity to critically question the world, the media, and themselves. This understanding

of design as a way of thinking becomes particularly clear when one considers the tension between technical feasibility and aesthetic significance.

Feasibility, Surface area, and Significance

In the digital age, the relationship between technology and aesthetics is undergoing a fundamental shift. AI systems generate images in seconds, platforms such as Canva make layouts accessible to everyone, and Instagram curates filter worlds at the touch of a finger. Feasibility is omnipresent, but the aesthetic substance often remains thin.

The central tension is: What happens to design when anything is possible, and why does it lose depth, resistance, and context in the process? In classical aesthetics, design was considered a response to experiences, feelings, or ideas. The creative process was bound to material, time, body, error, and intuition. Today, it is often not the problem that stands at the beginning, but the option. Technology means:

- Temporary superiority over meaning; a design is possible before it is clear what it is supposed to say;
- Simultaneity instead of depth; everything can be represented, but nothing has to be penetrated;
- Form without necessity; design happens because it is technically easy to produce, not because it is needed.

This pre-structuring is also evident in image processing itself: quality models and databases (Ghadiyaram & Bovik, 2015; Pianykh et al., 2018) attempt to capture perception algorithmically, thus making aesthetic decisions increasingly predictable. Byung-Chul Han refers to this as a “flattening of experience”: algorithms take over decisions, aesthetics frees us from thinking (Han, 2015). Design becomes available, but superficial.

The new image culture focuses on smoothness: frictionless interfaces, pleasing surfaces, algorithmically optimized designs. Lev Manovich describes this as an “aesthetic of mood”: images create atmospheres instead of meanings, flatlays replace diaries, mood shots replace arguments. This creates an imbalance between surface and meaning: feasibility replaces meaning. For aesthetic education, this results in the task of making design visible as a cultural negotiation process. Didactically, this means:

- Deconstruction of common image norms;
- Conscious disruption of technical specifications;
- Critical self-reflection in visual practices;
- Anchoring design in a social context.

A striking example is provided by feminist media art, which, as Baer emphasizes, “creates counter-images to standardized gender roles and creates irritating, resistant spaces” (Baer, 2018, p. 112). To do this, students need not only technical skills, but above all image reading skills, judgment, and creative freedom. An aesthetic education that aims at differentiation, criticism, and self-empowerment must productively navigate the tension between feasibility and meaning. It is helpful to address central axes of tension, such as:

- Speed vs. slowness: instant image and prompt vs. process and contemplation;
- Surface vs. depth: complacency and filter aesthetics vs. contextuality and superimposition of meaning;
- Specification vs. expression: templates and presets vs. individual form finding;
- Effect vs. insight: likeability vs. irritation and reflection.
- Machine vs. subject: output optimization vs. judgment.

These axes can serve as a didactic tool by making design decisions conscious. What is decisive is not the perfect form, but the understanding of design as a form of thinking: as an opportunity to critically question the world, the media, and the self. It is precisely in this tension that it becomes apparent that digital aesthetics are not determined solely in the virtual realm. Physical and material dimensions open up counter-spaces to the smooth surface, marking resistance in the digital realm and taking the idea further.

Materiality and Physicality: Resistance in the Digital Realm

Digital image culture often appears disembodied: gestures are reduced to swiping, tapping, and clicking, and material resistance seems to have been eliminated. But it is precisely in the loss of material boundaries that the significance of physicality becomes visible again. Classic design processes such as drawing, painting, and modeling required engagement with materials, tools, and mistakes. In the digital realm, however, the resistance of the material recedes behind smooth interfaces.

Theoretically, this can be summarized with Flusser's diagnosis of “technical images” (1991): images no longer arise from actions, but from devices. Physical traces disappear, replaced by calculations. Empirical research shows, however, that material practices open up aesthetic depth: working with tools changes perception and body schema (Maravita & Iriki, 2004; Cardinali et al., 2009). Digital media can also have a physical effect, for example when photography intensifies experiences (Diehl et al., 2016), but usually without the resistance of classic media.

For Byung-Chul Han (2022), it is precisely this loss that is problematic: the smoothness of interfaces relieves us of the burden of thinking, making experience appear consumable but shallow. From an educational perspective, this raises the question of how materiality and

physicality can be regained in digital design processes. Didactically, there are three approaches:

1. Media change: Digital design is intertwined with analog processes. Sketching, collaging, or sculptural work interrupts the logic of smooth interfaces and opens up other spaces of experience;
2. Embodied reflection: As Martikainen et al. (2021) show, the conscious integration of bodily experiences can deepen aesthetic reflection. Movement, gestures, and performative processes connect design with physical presence;
3. Material criticism: Digital tools also have materiality, devices, energy costs, and raw materials. Critical education therefore addresses the ecological and social dimensions of digital images (cf. Schorch, 2021).

The task of aesthetic education is to make the apparent disembodiment of digital design visible and to create learning spaces in which resistance, materiality, and physical experience become productive. She contrasts the smoothness of interfaces with the value of material and body, not as a nostalgic clinging to the analog, but as a necessary dimension of an aesthetic practice that enables depth, difference, and reflection.

In conclusion, it can therefore be summarized that technology and aesthetics are never neutral, but always exert power effects that must be critically reflected upon.

Conclusion: Technology is not Neutral, nor is Aesthetics

Technology and aesthetics are never neutral variables, but are always framed by society. The tension between technical feasibility and aesthetic education is therefore not resolvable, but rather the central challenge of the present. Digital tools expand the possibilities of design, but they do not replace the need to generate meaning and reflect critically.

Emancipatory aesthetic education must therefore take a two-pronged approach: it teaches confident use of digital tools while strengthening the ability to reveal their limitations and power effects. Aesthetic practice must not be reduced to efficiency or smooth surfaces, but must enable difference, irritation, and insight.

In the digital age, aesthetic education means reading, questioning, and productively using images, interfaces, and cultural meanings. Against standardization and sensory overload, the task of education is to open up spaces for reflection and resistance. Design is thus always more than a question of form: it is an appropriation of the world, and the way we design determines what kind of world becomes possible.

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How to be an Effective Facilitator in a Problem-Based Learning Course? Creating an Open Space for Performing Arts Education

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Abstract

Problem-based learning (PBL) is widely employed in higher education curricula across the world. As the name implies, this method is a student-centered method that exposes learners to real-life problems, where they take responsibility for their learning through problem-solving. A crucial factor for the successful implementation of PBL is the effectiveness of the facilitator, whose primary role is to support learning without any hassle. This chapter explores the implementation of PBL in a performing arts course within a liberal arts and management education setting in India, focusing on the role of a facilitator. How did the students perceive the facilitation? Which traits did the students value in their facilitator? What were the hindrances faced by them when navigating the transition from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction? Drawing on qualitative data, this chapter reveals that effective facilitation can foster self-directed, conversational, interdisciplinary, constructive, and experiential learning. Furthermore, it critically discusses the attributes of an effective facilitator. The findings highlight both the successes and challenges that occurred during facilitation sessions. The future scope of the study is suggested.

Keywords

Facilitator; Liberal Arts and Management Education in India; Performing Arts in Higher Education; Problem-based Learning Curriculum

Introduction

With the rapidly changing educational landscape, the traditional teaching methods are increasingly being scrutinized for their effectiveness in preparing students to handle the complexities of today's business world. Many educators have thus recognized transformations in prescribed syllabi to offer learners with specialized skills so that they can solve problems in real-life situations. As the demand for critical thinking, information processing, and analytical skills grows, it becomes evident that a new approach to learning and teaching is warranted, and problem-based learning is one such innovative space.

First introduced in medical education in the 1960s by Howard Barrows at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada, problem-based learning (PBL) is a student-centered method that exposes learners to real-life problems (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980), where they take responsibility for their learning through problem-solving. A PBL curriculum also promotes integrated knowledge by requiring articulation across disciplines and challenging the discipline-based view of the curriculum. It supports the development of key competencies such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and autonomy. This shift from a teacher-centered to a student-centered model supports not only cognitive development but also social and practical competencies for both teachers and students.

Generally, the traditional approach positions the teacher as an authority figure who transmits knowledge through a rigid, predefined curriculum, leaving students with a more receptive and passive role. In contrast to traditional teaching methods, where the teacher controls the pace and content of lessons, PBL offers greater space for questioning, exploration, and open dialogue, allowing students to engage more deeply with their learning. While PBL highlights collaboration, dialogue, and critical thinking as students work together to solve complex, real-world problems, there are limited opportunities to question and engage in dialogue with the teacher in the conventional method. Additionally, a PBL curriculum values the learner's problem-solving skills over memorization in a conventional curriculum. The assessment in the PBL framework is centered around students' ability to engage with and solve problems rather than on taking tests.

Given this, several higher education institutions around the world have adopted PBL. Across Europe and the United States of America (USA), scholars, such as Céu Roldão (2009), Elliot Eisner (2003 a & b), and Brian Allison (1985), offer distinct perspectives on curriculum, particularly within the context of active methodologies such as PBL and arts-based approaches. Regarding PBL, Allison (UK), in alignment with Eisner (USA), highlights the central role of the arts in developing reflective thinking. The arts, they argue, teach unique ways of thinking-such as attention to detail, contextual sensitivity, and symbolic interpretation-which are not cultivated to the same extent in other disciplines. They further advocate for curricula that promote personal and cultural expression rather than solely

content acquisition, encouraging interdisciplinary approaches that connect art, science, ethics, and society.

Eisner (2003) promotes an aesthetic, expressive, and a sensitive curriculum, contending that arts education fosters ways of thinking and perceiving the world that are essential to human development. For Eisner, curriculum should be conceived as an aesthetic experience—one that evokes meaning, emotion, and multiple interpretations—guided by aesthetic and processual criteria rather than solely by objective testing. Similarly, Roldão (2009, *idem*), writing from Portugal, envisions curriculum as the construction of contextualized and meaningful learning, based on real-world problems and grounded in a constructivist paradigm. In this view, the student is active, participatory, and co-author of learning that is relevant and situated in lived contexts—resonating with Allison’s (1985, *idem*), idea of curriculum as something that should be deeply connected to students’ lived experiences.

In parallel, Indian colleges and universities have implemented PBL across disciplines (Ghosh, 2007; Varadarajan, 2022). The concept of the teacher as a mediator, as articulated by Roldão, aligns closely with the notion of the facilitator found in the literature—particularly in the works of Ghosh (2007), Nanda and Manjunatha (2013), and Varadarajan (2022)—in terms of guiding, structuring interaction, and co-constructing knowledge.

In a PBL curriculum, the educator takes on the role of a mediator by guiding and facilitating students’ investigative processes with a reflective, democratic, and transformative vision of curriculum. Numerous researchers believe that effective facilitation is important to the success of PBL. Hmelo-Silver (2004) defines a facilitator as someone who enables learners to identify their needs, guide group processes, encourage critical thinking, and assess the achievement of learning goals. Studies have also featured favorable traits of a facilitator, including promoting learning without any hassle (Hogan, 2000), designing a quality problem (Van Berkel & Dolmans, 2006), empowering learners (Heron, 1999), and guiding learners on how to learn (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980).

However, there is limited research on the role of a facilitator in a theory-based course in performing and visual arts, especially in India. Despite the fact that co-author Banerjee (2016) addressed the overall implementation and effectiveness of this course, discussions on the facilitator’s role remained unexamined. Thus, the chapter aims to critically examine the students’ perception of the facilitation, the traits they value in their facilitator and the concerns they raise. Drawing on students’ narratives, the study reveals how facilitation approaches have engaged learners in cultivating critical skills to build arguments, defend their cases, and assume responsibility for knowledge. The study has potential as it encourages self-directed learning, discusses the facilitator’s function within the PBL framework, and connects performing arts with broader concepts of globalization, liberal arts, and management education.

Methodology

Research Participants

The study involved a small cohort of learners enrolled in 2008-2009. Only 4 learners (3 males and 1 female) chose this course, whereas the next trimester enrolled 19 (11 males and 8 females). The student population age ranged between 18 and 19 years and represented mixed religious and linguistic backgrounds.

Data Collection and Analysis

This qualitative study included data collection techniques, such as fieldnotes, classroom observation, reflective journal writing, and interviews (face-to-face and electronic mail).

Ethical Considerations

Students' consent was obtained to use their narratives. Pseudonyms were used to maintain their privacy.

Reliability

To establish credibility, narratives were reviewed by two neutral academic colleagues, one from the USA and one from Britain. Among them, one academic's field of expertise was dance education, and the other's field of specialization was sociology.

The Context and the Method

The establishment of a four-year undergraduate education was launched in India in 2007, which aimed to award a bachelor's degree in business administration (BBA) and a diploma certificate in liberal education (LE), which aimed at a multidisciplinary approach to learning. In the first two years of this program, each trimester covered broad disciplines, such as 'art and humanities,' 'languages,' 'mathematics, physical and life sciences,' 'fine and performing arts,' and 'global studies.' The training of Indian performing arts, including classical music or dance, typically follows a teacher-centered method, known as *guru-shishya* (teacher-student tradition), where students learn chiefly through the learning-by-doing method, and its evaluation is chiefly limited to performance and writing theories. The curriculum offered humanities and sciences, along with performing and fine art subjects, which greatly differed from conventional courses, which allowed students to pursue an interdisciplinary approach to learning (Banerjee 2016).

Designing the Problem

Based on Biley's PBL model (1999), the present PBL course included the following steps: interpret the scenario and concept, clarify terminologies, brainstorm and organize the outcomes, define problems and learning needs, gather information using various resources, explore collated materials in relation to given problems, present their arguments in front of peers, and finally engage in peer evaluation (Banerjee, 2016).

The course included five problems surrounding a topical theme of globalization. Each problem was uniquely crafted to promote critical thinking, creativity, and communication abilities essential for problem-solving in corporate settings. The first problem involved a writing assignment that analyzed the impact of global exchanges on traditional Indian performing arts.

Subsequent problems challenged learners to deepen their skills and connect personal experiences to broader theoretical frameworks. By engaging with a case study, the second problem was designed to assess potential for inquiry-based learning and decision-making, creativity, ability to integrate knowledge from practice, and presentation skills. It engaged the students to build cases and place arguments on the effects of globalization on artistic practices, while peer discussions encouraged empathetic engagement with diverse perspectives. The third problem, another writing task (the role of aesthetic distance in art appreciation), was designed to aid in metacognition and connecting students' experiences as well as to the theme of globalization.

The fourth problem tasked students to examine how globalization, media, and information technologies have radically transformed the form, style, and content of popular culture. The classroom presentation included independent research and data analysis to draw informed conclusions while simulating a business scenario. The final problem tasked students to engage in a classroom debate arguing for or against whether globalization of the performing arts is an expansion or erosion of culture. These problems encouraged critical-thinking, cognitive, and presentation skills.

Researchers' Role

As a practitioner-scholar of Bharatanatyam and Tagore dance forms, Banerjee shapes her educational approach through her cultural exchanges and global collaborations. Her educational practices advocate the importance of tradition while also embracing hybridization and cross-cultural influences. Her teaching philosophy is based on the belief that dance education should preserve cultural heritage while also adapting to contemporary contexts. She develops critical thinking and creativity skills of the learning community through the use of multimedia resources. This synthesis of theory and practice informs her

course designs that enhance learning outcomes in diverse settings (Banerjee, 2010, 2013; Banerjee & Baker, 2019, 2024). In this context, Banerjee designed and led the PBL course in India.

Moura's research intersects with other artistic investigations, such as those in the field of visual arts (e.g., Richardson et al., 2020; Moura, 2013). As a Portuguese researcher, she has extensively explored the integration of problem-solving approaches in arts education, particularly within the scope of image, identity, and creative connections in projects between 2008 and 2025. In her writings, Moura emphasizes the role of arts education in promoting critical thinking and active citizenship, advocating pedagogical strategies that encourage students to engage with real social and cultural issues through artistic expression. She combines art with civic education to develop students' capacity to analyze and address complex social problems.

In their respective fields, these two educators have argued for a new learning environment to blend arts with critical pedagogy for preparing learners to deal with contemporary problems. And they bring out their shared experiences and insights in this collaborative paper. Only one testimonial is presented here, as the focus of the study is placed on the Indian case. Nevertheless, it is relevant to reflect on the characteristics of the teacher's role in the Portuguese context, particularly in the case of a practitioner who adopted a PBL approach, as described in the student's account selected for inclusion in this section:

I would highlight that the role of the facilitator who adopts such a methodology clearly reflects the enthusiasm they demonstrate in their practice, along with systematic encouragement and a high level of academic demand. In the case of this particular teacher, there was no room for discouragement! She would ask questions and provide help when difficulties arose, offering explanations in a very clear manner. I would emphasise her remarkable energy, the knowledge and experience she shared, her ongoing collaboration, interpersonal and motivational skills, perseverance, and the value she placed on students' work. (Ricca, 2021, Appendix, n.p.)

Discussions

The learners rated the facilitation sessions positively and identified several key aspects that contributed to their learning. One of the major themes that emerged during students' interviews was interdisciplinarity, an important goal of liberal education. For instance, Nita shared her positive experience about how multiple artistic genres in classroom presentations drew connections among diverse topics: 'Since each person chose a different art form, we were exposed to multiple artistic genres. What was most intriguing was that through the diversity of the arts, there was a common thread – globalization – that connected all our seemingly unrelated topics.'

Kavya's early understanding of globalization began long before she was exposed to it as a theoretical concept, as she expressed:

Hailing from Sikkim and born to a tribe that is rich in stories, songs, rituals and also observing the culture of other tribes, I have always been fascinated by the variety around me [...]. My extended family included Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, and nature worshippers. So, singing in a choir, watching plays and musicals, and listening to classical music, Nepali songs, and rock and roll at the same time—all of these factors have played a great role in shaping my perspective towards what we call globalization.

The above student's narrative is in line with Allison's (1985) idea that encourages the intertwining of a curriculum with students' lived experiences.

Learner autonomy emerged as a key pedagogical maxim, with students valuing the importance of self-direction, specifically in the reflective writing tasks that fostered deeper understanding of the self while moving beyond surface-level comprehension. Pratiti's interview narrative illustrates how the independent space reduced anxiety:

During my school days, I never liked my art teacher standing beside me constantly and monitoring my drawings [...]. I wanted to have some distance from my teacher so I could focus on the assigned task. I felt nervous about continuing my work under constant supervision.

By fostering a learning environment that prioritized independent learning, the facilitation sessions created conditions for students to engage more deeply and confidently with the material.

In another interview, Ritesh expressed that problem-solving sessions were spaces for sharing their ideas freely in the learning process: 'I had never enjoyed classroom lectures during my school life because there was hardly any room for self-expression. I am an amateur percussionist, and in this course, I could talk about something that I perform.' So, he connected theory with practice, enhancing his imaginative and creative skills. The facilitation sessions were, therefore, perceived as transformative, fostering independence and creativity, along with driving learners to have a more fulfilling experience.

Furthermore, active learning and student empowerment were central to the facilitation approach. For example, Akriti's reflection on her experience highlights the importance of this dynamic: 'I knew that it was my responsibility to look for solutions. The answers were not hidden in the books, but in me.' Additionally, Nita mentioned that problem-solving sessions provided them the opportunity to unfold problems rather than telling them how to do things (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980). This narrative is consistent with contemporary educational theories that advocate learner-centered methodologies. This was complemented by Akriti's description of the collaborative nature of the learning experience when she said: 'This course was meant for all of us. We all were involved in this course.' Both of her comments emphasize

that the course provided appropriate support to learners while also empowering them (Heron, 1999) in developing their independence and self-confidence.

In addition, contextual learning came up as a vital component of the facilitation approach. Amartya's feedback about the use of real-life examples in classrooms reinforces the effectiveness of contextual learning. Another student, Shailendra, reflected that the course impacted his imaginative skill in preparing classroom presentations, suggesting the role of creativity in active learning. All of these experiences advocate for contextual learning, creativity, and imagination, resonating with the pedagogical thesis of Eisner (2003a & b).

While sharing their problem-solving processes, participants commented on how their backgrounds impacted their learning process. Kavya's reflections on how her multicultural exposure enabled her to draw connections between her travels (from North Eastern to Western India) and online resources to reconfigure her learning:

I have been exposed to different music styles as a part of my growing-up years, from Indian classical to Western music [...]. I went for a music festival in Pune, where a movie on 'Indian Ocean,' an Indian band, was screened. The kind of music they create interested me [...]. They use contemporary themes but rustic and sometimes ancient languages for lyrics. I came across the website for world music and listened to the songs on YouTube [...]. After listening to their songs, along with the songs I was already familiar with that had multilingual lyrics, I drew a broad framework for my final presentation. [...].

In this way, by attending a real-life show and using other resources, the above student demonstrated the interconnectedness of her past knowledge and experiences with new learnings. This scenario demonstrated the value of multicultural and interdisciplinary perspectives in enhancing problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.

These problem-solving presentations also showed how this course had challenged preconceived notions and encouraged learners to reach consensus through arguments. As Pritam put it: 'I loved the way the theme of magic was presented, as I had never imagined it could attain the status of a performing art. All the arguments convinced me to recognize the complexities of its performance and the way it was globalized in a unique way.' The diversity not only broadened Pritam's repertoire of performing arts, but also exposed him to new practices, and helped him reach an agreement with his peers.

Facilitator's Attributes

According to narrative analysis, the learners in the course valued a range of traits in their facilitator, including her personality, professionalism, communication skills, openness, energy, knowledge and experience, supportive nature, motivational skills, perseverance, and appreciation for student works.

Hogan (2000) mentioned that an effective facilitator should have the ability to promote hassle-free learning, a sentiment that was echoed by many of the students who valued their facilitator for creating a conducive environment for learning. Amartya went on to argue that an effective facilitator should possess an open mind to design an interdisciplinary course and design new ideas: 'I must admit that charting such an interdisciplinary course is challenging, but credit must be given to the instructor for being open to new ideas.' Kavya responded similarly, saying: 'Openness to all genres of performing arts and student-oriented pedagogy was the focal point that made the course interesting, engaging, and constructive to our learning and knowledge.' This viewpoint echoes the argument of Chuan et al. (2011) that a facilitator should maintain an open space for learning.

According to Van Berkel and Dolmans (2006), a key responsibility of the facilitator is to design quality problems that challenge learners and stimulate critical thinking, as evident in Amartya's comment:

We looked at the problem from different viewpoints. [...] Looking at globalization from the perspective of dance and performing arts was refreshing instead of talking about the internet, air travel, and television. All we could hope for was getting to the destination by another route. This was the "innovative" bit of the course.

The above statement implies that a facilitator's role is to encourage diverse perspectives and guide discussions that transcend conventional narratives.

As argued by Heron (1999) and expressed by many students in this context, an important trait of a PBL facilitator is the ability to empower learners. Leena commented on how the facilitator created an unbiased, open forum for discussing the problems: 'Using examples and encouraging in-class discussions on personal views and perceptions, we tackled almost all the concepts in an unbiased and an open forum.' By encouraging in-class dialogues, the facilitator not only helped students solve complex problems but also ensured that all voices were heard.

Many shared that the reinforcement and encouragement they received from the facilitator motivated them to engage with the problems. Nita said in her interview: 'The instructor motivated us by rewarding every small achievement and worked separately on our weaknesses. She took extra care of those who were unclear about their tasks.' This supportive approach is vital for promoting a positive environment in which students feel safe. Similarly, Amartya appreciated how the facilitator fostered a safe learning environment that went beyond academic support:

It is often seen that cultural idiosyncrasies pose a barrier in learning. [...] In fact, many of my pronunciations were corrected by my teacher. She helped me understand the importance of punctuality and politeness. One of the most prominent things was her ability to extract work out of an individual not by coercion or aggression, but with reasoning and understanding.

The above learner indicated how the facilitator was a catalyst for change in reshaping his (ethical) behavior through classroom interactions.

Elsewhere, Amartya, Kavya, and Nikita commented on the facilitator's energy that significantly enhanced their motivation in learning. This finding echoes with Allsop's (1990) viewpoint and the learner's voice from Portugal (Ricca, 2021). A few placed importance on the facilitator's professionalism in terms of punctuality and not receiving phone calls inside the classroom. Although these traits may seem unimportant, they can help students prepare for their essential workplace skills as managers.

Negotiating Student Concerns

The transition to the PBL approach posed several challenges to learners, especially at the outset, with the need to adapt to autonomous learning. The findings revealed initial resistance, as cited in PBL literature. However, some problems continued and posed concerns. One of the primary concerns that the learners cited here was the absence of structured learning content like textbooks. As the condition demanded higher self-regulation, motivation, and guidance, students found it challenging.

Three students in the second trimester expressed dissatisfaction because they lacked clear-cut answers in their problem-solving sessions. Abdul expected straightforward solutions from the facilitator rather than being confronted with complex, ill-structured problems. In his own words: 'The course had only problems. I am getting lost...We need solutions from a teacher and not problems.' On another occasion, Rajiv's apathy towards the word 'problem' was rooted in his life experiences, which resulted in further disinterest in the course. Clearly, this method evoked frustration among those learners who are accustomed to traditional teaching methods and cannot step beyond the conventional mode of teaching.

The narratives also implied that they were overwhelmed by the PBL framework that demanded higher levels of self-regulation, confidence, and guidance. The experiences of students, including Abdul and Navin, illustrate misalignment between learner expectations and realities of PBL. Assessment criteria and what is the "right" way to learn were among other concerns (Hmelo-Silver, 2004). As noted, understanding the facilitator's expectations, unequal workload, and disappointment regarding grades were some more PBL concerns, which are in agreement with Pepper (2009).

In the case of Navin, who is also an amateur musician, there was a gap between his expectations and his understandings about a performing arts course: 'I was frustrated because I thought it was a practice-based course. There was no scope to perform my pieces. It was misleading because it was all about talking and talking.' Both Navin and Ritesh demonstrated their performance skills in classrooms; nevertheless, it was Navin who could not connect his works with globalization theories. Consequently, he felt undervalued, leading

to his disengagement. His disorientation was compounded by the facilitation approach to problem-solving. Although personal facilitation was offered after college hours through the Google Chat platform to mitigate this problem, Navin's performance improved, but he did not feel comfortable in the problem-solving sessions.

Although Kavya solved her problems with enthusiasm, she believed that the course should have included guest lecturers: 'The instructor did talk to us as someone who is experienced and performed, but perhaps having more people involved in it would have given us more exposure.' The constructive feedback underlines the importance of diverse perspectives to enhance learning outcomes.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a nuanced exploration of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) within a theory-oriented performing arts course offered in a liberal arts and management education setting in India. Through qualitative analysis of learner narratives, insights were gained into the effectiveness of facilitation strategies and the complex dynamics elicited by this student-centered pedagogical approach. The findings demonstrate that when supported by effective facilitation, PBL fosters self-directed, dialogic, interdisciplinary, constructive, and experiential learning. The problems presented stimulated critical thinking, creativity, collaborative problem-solving, autonomy, and reflective engagement.

By linking theory and practice, this methodology proved fruitful in cultivating transversal competencies highly valued in contemporary higher education contexts. However, notable challenges were also identified. The lack of structured learning materials, ambiguity around expectations and assessment criteria, and the demands of self-regulation contributed to learner frustration, particularly during the initial transition to this model. These challenges echo well-documented tensions in the PBL literature, especially concerning resistance among students accustomed to traditional, didactic teaching methods. This study contributes to the broader academic discourse by illustrating the applicability of PBL in less commonly explored domains such as performing arts and theory-based arts education. It also underscores the centrality of the facilitator, whose role extends beyond problem design to encompass active listening, guidance, support, and the creation of safe, equitable learning environments.

Pedagogically, the data suggest that facilitation sensitive to learners' needs, contexts, and expectations is critical to PBL's success. Strategies such as preparatory scaffolding, clear communication of assessment criteria, inclusion of diverse voices (e.g., guest lecturers), and hybridizing traditional and PBL methodologies may enhance inclusivity and effectiveness.

Limitations of this study include the small participant cohort, the limited two-trimester duration, and reliance on a single facilitator. Future research should involve comparative and

longitudinal studies to better delineate the competencies underpinning effective facilitation and to examine the transferability of PBL across varied disciplinary and cultural contexts. Additionally, investigating how PBL can be adapted to accommodate diverse learner profiles, promoting critical, inclusive, and culturally situated learning, remains a pertinent avenue. In conclusion, while PBL demands a paradigmatic shift for both educators and students, its transformative potential lies in fostering meaningful, critical learning connected to contemporary challenges-particularly within the arts and interdisciplinary education.

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Playful Encounters in the Art Classroom: Art Pedagogy for Young Children in the Primary School

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Abstract

Teaching art, craft and design to young children of primary age takes a special kind of knowledge and skill that comes from understanding not only the nature of the subject but also the nature of childhood. Art practice in itself can be linked to playful attitudes, imaginative responses, creative risk taking, experimentation and exploration, and these attributes are importantly learned during the formative years. As the 'schoolification' of young children threatens creative methods and pedagogies by focusing on narrow targets, it is vital that we advocate strongly for open-ended and process-led teaching and learning when considering the subject area of art, craft and design in order to promote a love and understanding of art, and for children to develop confidence in their own artistic journeys and capabilities. In this chapter we shall explore the key principles that underpin core values for teaching and learning in the visual arts that are especially applicable to the Early Years and Primary age phases, particularly from a UK perspective. We shall set out a clear justification for playful learning opportunities to occur in the art classroom and for children to take their enjoyment of making and engaging with art into adulthood and into the future.

Keywords

Creativity; Play; Process Art; Visual Art; Wellbeing

Introduction

'It took me four years to paint like Raphael, but a lifetime to paint like a child.'

Picasso

Art, Craft and Design is a dynamic subject, and one which is not encumbered by the recounting of information or a focus on having the correct answer to a question or problem. On the contrary – learning about, with, in, and through art (Lindstrom 2012) can bring a joyful approach to life itself – and this is never more than clear when we observe young children involved in creative work through their play. The German educator, Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), who opened the first kindergarten, recognised that childhood is a valid phase of a person's life, rather than simply a preparation for adulthood, and that play is effectively children's work which enables them to make sense of the world around them. He stated that 'Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood for it alone is the free expression of what is in a child's soul' (Froebel Trust, n.d.), and we can perhaps already start to see the links between this notion of childhood and the way that an artist works and thinks. An artist's work is also a playful activity, as experimentation and exploration are necessary in order to develop a line of enquiry or to progress an idea or a skill: the resulting artwork is an expression of thoughts and feelings that come from within the individual and are then shared with the outside world.

An artist often deals with the unknown - with uncertainty and ambiguity – and the same applies to young children in an arts-rich learning environment where they are being exposed to new ideas and concepts for the first time. This is often in opposition to other areas of the curriculum that are focused on fixed outcomes and the right answers being achieved. Art and Design education can present an alternative way of thinking, doing and being, which can work very well for young children who thrive by learning in less formal ways. Dealing with feelings and emotions also sets Art and Design education apart from many other subject areas in which specific knowledge is taught in a linear fashion with little acknowledgement of the inner soul.

A rhizomatic paradigm (Irwin et al., 2006) means that art practice can take the artist in any of many potential directions, and the final artwork or outcome comes about as a result of exploratory and open-ended research. The same model applies to children when engaging with creative play and art making through process rather than product-based projects. As teachers it is important to examine the world of imagination and play and to connect this to the world of contemporary Art, Craft and Design practice to inspire approaches that can be utilised in the classroom. Some of the joys in this area of learning are that, though its roots are embedded within the history of every culture on earth, art is constantly evolving in terms of themes and processes, and ways and means of working, by introducing provocations and

questions– always inventing and reinventing. Art, Craft and Design education involves building on the past and developing new ideas that are all about the future.

Importance of Play

What is play and who is it for? A look at the dictionary definition of 'play' is more likely to confuse rather than clarify! It seems that 'play' has several characterisations and many of these have fairly negative connotations. For example, Merriam-Webster gives a long list of definitions including:

- a: to engage in sport or recreation: [frolic](#)
- b: to toy or fiddle around with something played with her food.
- c: to deal or behave frivolously or mockingly: [jest](#)
- d: to deal in a light, speculative, or sportive manner.
- e: to make use of double meaning or of the similarity of sound of two words for stylistic or humorous effect.
- f: to move aimlessly about: trifle.

(<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/play>)

It is perhaps not surprising that 'play' is trivialised in terms of educational advancement, and this is evident in schools and educational settings where learning is formal and focused on numeracy and literacy skills at the expense of a broad and balanced curriculum. Anxiety persists amongst teachers and parents alike that a child might fall behind or be unable to keep up with classmates. The tendency becomes to place further pressure on the child and cut down on playful activities or informal ways of learning, in the hope that by forcing learning to happen, the child will succeed. The upshot of this is that play is perceived as not a serious activity, and in some circumstances, it could even be considered a luxury which is a very worrying trend (Annet, 2024). It is often Early Years professionals as well as arts educators who understand the value of play for its intrinsic necessity for child development and wellbeing. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states this importance in Article 13 (freedom of expression) and Article 31 (leisure, play and culture):

Article 13 - Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.

Article 31 - Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

These Articles remind governments who are signed up the UNCRC that they need to ensure that children's rights to play, create and express themselves are protected and respected.

There are vital reasons why these two Articles are within the Rights of the Child. Play is physical, emotional, and intellectual activity rolled into one, and in this way, it enables a holistic approach to learning. It is both pleasurable and creative for the individual, and it opens the door to imaginative spaces that allow children to make discoveries about their worlds in safe and fun ways. It facilitates first-hand experiences that enable children to engage with how their actions can affect others, and how others can affect them. In play, children are in control of their own environment and can repeat and practice newly acquired skills and competencies without the fear of failure. They learn to manipulate materials and objects, and test boundaries, questioning and reflecting on their discoveries. Annet goes so far as to acknowledge that 'Play is so important in the lives of children that they might be considered to be play species; children who do not play are in some sense not fully children' (2024, p. 31). A 'play species' is an interesting concept, as this is helpful for us to consider the notion of what the world would look like without our innovators and our creatives to push positive progress forward, and for sure this would not be the diverse and exciting world that we now know. Creative play is not the same as adult-led craft or activities where the outcome is determined. When children engage in creative play, they are independent learners, allowing themselves to develop their own ideas and thoughts, follow their own interests, and come to their own conclusions (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Children playing with a range of material

Play England's manifesto acknowledges that play is not just important for young people, but vital for people of all ages: 'Through play, people develop capabilities that help them to solve problems creatively and to develop resilience (Play England, 2024). The manifesto reminds us that it is through play that we advance not just personally, but across all sectors of industry and society. Through messing about with ideas and materials we create new thoughts and

items: through trial and error we learn what works and what does not, and this is true within the arts as well as in science. Playfulness is good for wellbeing as it engages the imagination to help us to cope with stress and to problem solve. It is perhaps more vital that we as artists can recognise the importance of the role of play in being a *maker*, and how we can use a playful approach to move our art practice on.

Creativity and Play

As an art educator I have taught hundreds, if not thousands, of people of all ages and stages in their art journey. What always stands out to me is the fear of failure that my tutees experience and the presumption that they are not creative enough. What has happened to them to make them feel this way as adults? Young children are not afraid of failure: they do not tell us they 'can't draw' or say that art is not for them – they will just pick up a crayon, or a paint brush and create a picture, or squeeze, push or poke some clay and make a sculpture, often delighting at the result. So, something must happen in between the joy of creating artwork as a young child, and the rejection of any acceptance of ability or desire to produce artistic output as an adult. What does happen in the middle of these two extremes is: school. A curriculum that is narrowly focused on core areas, such as literacy and numeracy, and one that is target driven, so that children either succeed or fail is out of date for the uncertain future that is now in front of us. With play, pleasure and creativity becoming a luxury rather than right, even art lessons can be formulaic and stressful, which does nothing except put children off wanting to engage with art. An over-prescribed, adult-orientated art curriculum can be as damaging to developing young children's creativity as not have any art education at all.

There is a wonderful story that explains this phenomenon called *The Little Boy*, by the poet and author, Helen E. Buckley that first appeared in School Arts Magazine in October 1961. The story goes like this:

"Good!" thought the little boy. He liked to make pictures. He could make all kinds. Lions and tigers, chickens and cows, trains and boats, and he took out his box of crayons and began to draw.

But the teacher said: "Wait! It is not time to begin!" And she waited until everyone looked ready. "Now," said the teacher, "We are going to make flowers."

"Good!" thought the little boy, he liked to make flowers, and he began to make beautiful ones with his pink and orange and blue crayons.

But the teacher said "Wait! And I will show you how." And it was red with a green stem. "There," said the teacher, "Now you may begin."

The little boy looked at the teacher's. Then he looked at this own flower. He liked his flower better than the teacher's. But he did not say this. He just turned his paper over. And made a flower like the teacher's. It was red with a green stem.

On another day, when the little boy had opened the door from the outside all by himself, the teacher said: "Today we are going to make something with clay."

"Good!" thought the little boy. Snakes and snowmen, elephants and mice, cars, and trucks, and he began to pull and pinch his ball of clay. But the teacher said: "Wait!" It is not time to begin!" And she waited until everyone looked ready.

"Now," said the teacher, "We are going to make a dish."

He liked to make dishes. And he began to make some that were all shapes and sizes.

But the teacher said, "Wait! And I will show you how." And she showed everyone how to make a deep dish. "There," said the teacher. "Now you may begin."

The little boy looked at the teacher's dish, then he looked at his own. He liked his dish better than the teacher's. But he did not say this. He just rolled his clay into a big ball again. And made a dish like the teacher's. It was a deep dish.

And pretty soon the little boy learned to wait, and to watch and to make things just like the teacher. And pretty soon he didn't make things of his own anymore.

Then it happened that the little boy and his family moved to another house, in another city, and the

little boy had to go to another school. And the very first day he was there the teacher said: "Today we are going to make a picture."

"Good!" Thought the little boy and he waited for the teacher to tell him what to do.

But the teacher didn't say anything. She just walked around the room. When she came to the little boy she said, "Don't you want to make a picture?"

"Yes," said the little boy. "What are we going to make?"

"I don't know until you make it," said the teacher.

"How shall I make it?" asked the little boy.

"Why, any way you like," said the teacher.

"Any colour?" asked the little boy.

"Any colour," said the teacher. "If everyone made the same picture, and the used the same colours, how would I know who made what?"

"I don't know," said the little boy. And he began to draw.

He drew a red flower with a green stem.

This is a salutatory tale of creativity being stripped away from a child by a teacher who does not know any better. The teacher thinks she is doing the right thing by instructing children on

how to make a piece of art. The truth, of course, is that there is no simple way to make art – every individual will do that in their own unique way, and they will need to have the freedom to explore ideas and materials in their own way too. The pedagogy applied by the teacher in the story goes against the principles and values of good art education as set out by Eliot Eisner in his book *Art and the Creation of Mind* (2002).

- Principle One. In justifying its case, art education should give pride of place to what is distinctive about the arts. Art education should not get side-tracked or attempt to justify its primary educational mission by focusing its efforts on outcomes that other fields can claim to serve equally well.
- Principle Two. Art education programs should try to foster the growth of artistic intelligence. The conjunction of art and intelligence is not common. Ability in art is assigned to talent and ability in “intellectual” subjects like mathematics and science to intelligence. For all the reasons I stated earlier, there has been a separation of art from intelligence. Yet as John Dewey pointed out in the William James Lectures, he gave at Harvard in 1932, intelligent reflection is a fundamental condition in the creation of art.
- Principle Three. Art education programs should help students learn how to create satisfying visual images, how to see and respond to what we call the arts and other visual forms, and how to understand the role the arts play in culture. Put simply, art education should help students learn how to create and experience the aesthetic features of images and understand their relationship to the culture of which they are a part.
- Principle Four. Art education should help students recognise what is personal, distinctive, and even unique about themselves and their work. There is so much in our schools that pushes for uniformity of response—standardized testing, for example—that one of the important contributions that art education can make to students is to help them become aware of their own individuality.
- Principle Five. Art education programs should make special effort to enable students to secure aesthetic forms of experience in everyday life. As one Chinese scholar is said to have commented, “First I see the hills in the painting, then I see the painting in the hills.” After a while it is not art that imitates life; it is life that imitates art.

(adapted from Eisner, 2002, p. 42)

Eisner is giving art educators permission to ensure that the pedagogy they use is always centred on a learner’s individual response to a stimulus or visual enquiry and that ‘diversity of outcome’ is achieved (2002, p. 44). This cannot happen in the story of *The Little Boy*, as the

teacher has already decided that only one outcome is needed – and that is the one that she dictates. This story is one that I have recounted to many primary school teachers beginning their careers, to emphasise the power that each teacher possesses to either facilitate children’s creativity in positive ways or to take it away from them with long lasting effects.

The teacher in the story has a particular view of what art is about and for, and this is passed on to the children in her class. It is, perhaps, this lack of understanding of the nature of the subject of art and design that leads to a reliance upon formulaic processes that result in uniformity of response. In turn, this instils a lack of confidence in skills and ability to produce ‘satisfying’ images as children progress through their school years and into adulthood. They falsely believe that they are not good enough, are not creative – are not artists. Ken Robinson’s seminal TED talk, *Do Schools Kill Creativity* (2006), initiated debate around exactly this problem twenty years ago: that we have become risk-averse, rather than risk-takers as school curricula across the Western World bear down on narrow goals and limited aspirations.

Artists, however, are creative risk takers and they have to be in order to be able to develop their own unique style of visually expressing their ideas and observations. I am not suggesting that children should only play around with ideas and materials, as this would mean that progress would not be made! In fact, there is a clear argument for subject specific techniques, vocabulary, materials, and processes to be taught explicitly, as Winner states that ‘unless children are taught the basic techniques, they have no means of giving expression to their ideas’ (1989, p. 50). I do advocate for a balance between explicitly taught substantive subject knowledge alongside support for children to use that learning in diverse, creative, and individual ways, where playful pedagogy remains foremost (Figs. 2 and 3).



Fig. 2 Young child making marks

Fig. 3 Children exploring the qualities of chalk

Process Over Product

To leave behind the notion that the final outcome of art making must always look a certain way or fulfil predetermined criteria is to take a leap of faith and allow the process of working through experimentation and investigation of materials to take over. Plamper and Wetterings (2024) suggest that acknowledging the materials themselves as a topic for children's own research is a good starting point for developing an attitude where the focus is removed from the end-product and placed upon the process of learning through exploration. Offering a wide variety of materials so that children encounter a range of different texture, shapes, forms and colours will give children the opportunity to make discoveries for themselves through trial and error. They should have space and time to find out what the materials can and cannot do without expectations that they are doing it 'right' or 'wrong'. Young children are fearless in this way and will delight in having freedom to choose and freedom to make their own discoveries that they can learn from. This in turn helps them to develop their own ideas and they can then express these ideas visually through a range of media. This allows children to gain new understandings about their environment and their own place within it. Plamper and Wetterings suggest that children are blocked from developing confidence in their own creativity when they are expected to produce artwork that is predetermined by adults.

McLennan (2010) acknowledges that it is with some difficulty that teachers let go of organising art activities that have predetermined outcomes, and often art is conflated with craft activity. Her research showed that non-specialist early years and primary school educators generally agreed that crafts can be described as step-by-step activities that usually relate to a topic or theme that the class is working on. For example, a common topic for study in an early education phase might be *Animals*, and a craft activity would be to use recycled materials to make a snake, or some such. This is what we would call a 'closed activity' as all children would follow the teacher's instruction on how to join shapes together, to create a long snake in this instance. The children would then be instructed to draw or paint these to complete the task. The resulting pieces would be identical apart from the child's decoration. Let us consider: What would the child have learned in this activity? Would the child have been offered any choice over materials or how they would like to construct the piece? Would they have been offered a choice over which animal shape they might like to try to create, or have they been given reference images to look at as stimulus? Would they have been asked *why* they want to make an animal? What shapes, colours, textures, and marks do they notice that will help them to make decisions to create their piece? Do they want to take part in this activity at all, or is it simply their turn? Do these step-by-step 'craft' lessons undermine the value of craft education itself, which surely is about honing skills and working with traditional as well as unconventional material and techniques, some of which have been handed down across many generations?

Many children will comply and happily complete the adult-led activity to please the adult before going back to their previous self-directed task as soon as they are permitted. As educators we must be truthful with ourselves and reflect on what those children are taking away with them: Yes, they have completed the activity; yes, they have followed instructions - but mostly they have learned that only adults need to have ideas and that they are the factory workers getting the task done.

McLennan reminds us that this is often true across all arts disciplines. For example, in the same way that visual art can become reduced to a recipe of instructions to follow until a specific object has been produced, musical understanding is undermined by the need to practice for a concert for parents; dramatic and imaginative play is replaced with rehearsing lines for a performance; and expressive dance and movement is contained to learning steps in a line-up for a show. We must question the value of such high stakes learning and ask ourselves for whose benefit are these pedagogies? Children learn that the point of art is to replicate something that is already in existence, whether that is through copying an artwork, or simply producing a factory line of objects that all look the same.

The danger once again rears its head that children learn there is no point to making art: they do not understand the nature of the subject, which is grounded in individuality. If we walk into an art gallery, we do not see one artwork replicating another, or look around and find the one that is 'correct'. We will see a diverse and exciting range of works – whether this is a group show or a one-person exposition. The art that we see displayed is the result of each artist's own decision-making and visual exploration of their theme. Ultimately, it is only a small selection of their body of work that they want us, the audience, to see. What we view in an art exhibition or gallery is the edited version of hours, days or even years of work, when the artist would have experimented, explored, researched, and investigated - essentially played around with their ideas, whilst problem solving on how to represent these visually for an unknown audience.

It is worth considering how we can use this paradigm in the classroom when teaching art to young children. We can revisit the example above, of children crafting a snake during their topic of *Animals* to explore how we can make this more open-ended and creative as an activity. Instead of asking all children making the same creature or forcing them to attend the activity, we can provide a range of materials for children to explore that will be irresistible for them. They will be motivated to find out what the materials can do - and what they can do with the materials. We can leave a selection of reference images, or small world toys around the room to give children some initial stimulus that they might or might not use to base their artwork upon. Choice and ownership are vital components to activate children's curiosity and creativity, and by not insisting that they work to a topic or theme allows them to respond in their own unique way. The materials themselves will provide the connection to children's own

personal experiences and interests, and the resulting learning is personalised and relevant to their individual stories and art journeys. There is, of course, going to be an end-product but it will be an end result that is exclusive to that one child (See Fig 4).



Fig. 4 Independent drawing of a tiger. Girl, age 4

Role of the Adult

Working in this way requires teachers to be open minded proponents of creative learning. It requires them to be the same risk-takers, keen observers with playful attitudes, as well as the ability to be reflective. Watts (2021) brings Eisner's principles up to date by suggesting, based on his own research (Watts 2005), that personal values are greatly influential in how teachers manage their own attitudes when teaching art to young children. He states that this is largely dependent upon each individual teacher's understanding of the value of the subject, and that there are five key value indicators, or themes to consider: developing knowledge and skills; experimentation; decision making and diverse responses; aesthetic experiences; enjoyment of making art. He advocates that being open to reflecting upon one's own values within the lens of these five themes can be transformative for learning not just in art but across the

whole curriculum. Openness to self-development and the ability to challenge long-held beliefs about the value of art itself require teachers to be risk-takers, and keen observers, whilst maintaining playful attitudes. We need them to be able to understand the nature of art and design and to be able to think like an artist, which means being able to deal with uncertainty regarding outcomes. Margaret Heffernan discusses this in her July 2025 TED talk, and in her book, *Embracing Uncertainty* (2025), where she explains how *not knowing* is what drives us to expand our understanding, rather than passively accepting our fate. If everything was certain, we would live our lives out by ticking items off a checklist, and much of children's experience of school follows this model. An artist's work is all about uncertainty. They start by following a desire or having curiosity to explore an idea and to create something new, but they do not know what that piece of work will look like until they have worked through the process of experimenting, investigating, editing, until the work exists in its final form. Heffernan reminds us that this process is not for the faint hearted, as it requires nerve, stamina and courage. All of these attributes are learned through play in our early and formative years, and it is essential that the teacher is supportive of children who must be prepared for growing up in our rather dangerous world that is full of uncertainties.

Playful Pedagogy

The role of the adult in supporting young children to think like an artist is apparent in the Italian Reggio Schools paradigm, where enquiry-led practice takes the form of children following their own personal interests and lines of investigation, in the same way that many contemporary artists develop their practice. The pedagogy, first applied in the schools of Reggio Emilia in Northern Italy in the post-war period, has been implemented in countries worldwide. It is underpinned by Eisner's Five Principles to Guide Practice (2002) and is one where inquisitiveness and imagination is key. Learning through the arts are at the centre of this methodology and every school has an Atelier, which is an open studio for children to test their ideas and develop understanding by using their hands to research through a range of materials. The child is viewed as an active citizen, rather than one who is an empty vessel waiting to be filled. The child, no matter how young, is understood to already have a range of competencies, knowledge, and experiences to draw upon and the teacher's role is facilitatory, to support and encourage. The children's learning is documented across the many creative ways that they express themselves. Loris Malaguzzi, who founded the Reggio schools, named these artistic ways of expression 'The One Hundred Languages of Children', which he turned into a poem:

The One Hundred Languages of Children

The child is made of one hundred.

The child has a hundred languages, a hundred hands, a hundred thoughts, a hundred ways of thinking, of playing, of speaking.

A hundred, always a hundred, ways of listening, of marvelling, of loving:

A hundred joys for singing and understanding;

A hundred worlds to discover;

A hundred worlds to invent; a hundred worlds to dream.

The child has a hundred languages, and a hundred, hundred more, but they steal ninety-nine.

The schools and the culture separate the head from the body.

They tell the child to think without hands, to do without head, to listen and not to speak, to understand without joy, to love and to marvel only at Easter and Christmas.

They tell the child to discover the world already there, and of the hundred they steal ninety-nine.

They tell the child that work and play, reality and fantasy, science and imagination, sky and earth, reason and dream are things that do not belong together.

And thus they tell the child that the hundred is not there.

The child says: No way! The hundred is there!

Conclusion

In this chapter we have considered the relationships between a playful approach to learning that is necessary to keep young children engaged in creating their own art and the ways in which artists think and make their art. Teaching and learning pedagogies across the Western World nations have become increasingly prescriptive and formal, which does not suit learning in art and design at any age or stage. Eisner's Five Principles for Guiding Practice (2002) are important anchors for teachers and art educators to keep art teaching distinct from other subject areas where a correct answer is sought. In art teaching, didactic and formulaic teaching methods are inappropriate from a pedagogical position, as this implies that there is a right and wrong way to create art. Craft work and following step-by-step instruction are often mistaken for art practice by some teachers, but even this is misrepresented in terms of the value of cultural engagement and the richness of learning about traditions and processes handed down through generations across the globe. I have advocated for an open-ended and playful approach to learning in art and design from a very early age, and that this approach be maintained throughout childhood. It is the closest children will come to believing that they are artists. The power is with teachers to facilitate this to happen by planning open-ended and playful art experiences and allowing children to follow their own interests and enquiries. Ultimately, we want young children to learn not to be afraid of working with uncertainty in

their creative pursuits, but to embrace it. This will give them confidence and strength in how they think and express themselves and help prepare them for the uncertain future that they will certainly have to address.

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Thematic Axis II

**Literature &
Communication
in Education**

Literature and Music: Creative Writing for a More Sustainable Environmental Awareness

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Abstract

The work of Sophia de Mello Breyner is vast and significant. Making part of the National Reading Plan, numerous composers, including Eurico Carrapatoso, Edward Ayres d'Abreu, Bernardo Sassetti, Filipe Raposo or Fernando Lopes-Graça, write several works based on Mello Breyner's writings. To understand the relevance of its use as a teaching resource, we set ourselves the objective of implementing an artistic project. Thus, and to objectifying a new narrative using the technique of creative writing, we would encourage a discussion about the importance of actions based on the objectives of a sustainable world. The accomplishment of these projects, in which converge the different areas of Artistic Education, led us to invite the students to write a story in which issues related to the distinct objectives of sustainable development were stated. During the implementation of this project, we analysed the elements of the original narrative to, in accordance with the new creative intentions, outline the contents of the new artistic project. To understand the relevance of our proposal, data collection tools were built and applied to verify if students have an increase in their acquisitions in the field of Artistic Expressions.

Keywords

Creative Writing; Eurico Carrapatoso; Fernando Lopes-Graça; Sophia de Mello Breyner; Sustainable Development; Teaching Resource

Introduction

The musical production designed for a younger audience, specifically for children, has gained an increasingly importance in the work of several Portuguese authors since the mid-20th century. Examples comprise *A Menina do Mar* (1958) and *Aquela Nuvem e as Outras* (1987) by Fernando Lopes-Graça (1906-1994), based on a text by Sophia de Mello Breyner (1919-2004) and Eugénio de Andrade (1923-2005), respectively, or *As Cançõeszinhas da Tila* (1958-59), by the same composer, founded on poems by Matilde Rosa Araújo (1921-2010). More recently, we can mention the works *O violino cigano* (2005-06) or *Como se faz Cor-de-laranja* (2006-07), by Pedro Faria Gomes (b. 1979) or *O LOBO DIOGO E O MOSQUITO VALENTIM - in memoriam Francis Poulenc* (2002), by one of the most prolific composers of his generation, Eurico Carrapatoso (b. 1962).

This author also writes *A Floresta* (2003-04) grounded on a text by Sophia de Mello Breyner, or *Fala Bicho* (2017) based on a text by Violeta Figueiredo (b. 1947). This one is recommended for the 2nd year of Basic Education. Carrapatoso similarly writes *Um Pequeno Conto Musical* (2010) built on the text *A Arca do Tesouro* by Alice Vieira (b. 1943). Luís Tinoco (b. 1969) compose *Contos Fantásticos* (2005-06), based on a text by Terry Jones (b. 1942), and Nuno Côrte-Real (b. 1971) writes *O Rapaz de Bronze* (2007) on a homonymous text by Sophia de Mello Bryner. More recently, the young Tiago Derriça (1986) compose *Uma Descoberta Importante* (2017), *Um banho de sons* (2017), *Verão* (2016), *Chuva* (2016) and *Frei João sem Cuidados* (2019), this one constructed over a Portuguese folk tale. We can also mention Carlos Garcia (b. 1983), who composed a set of works dispersed by the Orquestra Geração and Sérgio Azevedo (b. 1968) (Vilar, 2018). By this enumeration, we want to put aware the work of Portuguese composers on texts written for a young audience¹.

Sopia de Mello Breyner Andresen wrote several texts that are important in a pedagogical way. Among them, we can mention the editions of *A Menina do Mar*, *A Floresta*, *A Fada Oriana* and *O Rapaz de Bronze*, works that inspire children's imagination and make a part of the Nacional Reading Plan. These works, among others, have attracted the interest of some composers. In this context, *A Floresta* (2003-04) by Eurico Carrapatoso, was for us the starting point for a broader search for elements of the work, as well as others that were based on texts by the same author. We realized that Mello Breyner's work leads through a narrative that consents the unveiling of several material and immaterial constructions that, in our opinion, can be used as a teaching resource. They also can encourage a discussion around environmental issues and the importance of implementing actions based on the principles narrated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To understand the relevance of its use as a teaching resource, we established as an objective the conception of an artistic project. This project must have, in addition to the development of creative writing, the objectification of several sounds and musical elements, and the

discussion of the concept of soundscape and its importance for musical composition. By analyzing the sound that surrounds us in our daily lives, capturing it, and including it in the creation of a sound design, we instilled a taste for sound, sound recording and editing, but also the hearing of the sound of the spaces of a daily life that is embodied in relation to nature. Since we asked them to write an original story, it was important to outline the context of the narrative and the identification of all the sounds and musical elements associated with it. We establish that the result should reflect the elements highlighted by the reading of Andresen. Finally, data collection tools were constructed and applied, such as a logbook and a questionnaire survey. To increase the acquisitions in the field of Artistic Expressions, new technologies applied to musical creation were useful.

Literature and music: the case of Sophia de Mello Breyner, Eurico Carrapatoso, Fernando Lopes-Graça, Bernardo Sasseti and Edward Luiz Ayres d'Abreu

Sophia de Mello Breyner's writing demonstrates solid erudition, with a great exaltation of Greek culture, a fact that is evident in the presence of some elements of this culture in her writing. Among them, we can cite the use of some myths and symbols, those related to nature or time. Its relevance for the children's literature is undeniable and the quality of her writing, as well as the imagery that emerges in her readers, gives rise to a renewed interest in her work. In this sense, we are confronted with the enunciation of differentiating proposals, of which we highlight those presented here: the works of Eurico Carrapatoso, Fernando Lopes-Graça, Bernardo Sasseti and Edward Ayres d'Abreu.

A Floresta by Sophia de Mello Breyner and Eurico Carrapatoso

The relationship between literature and music constitutes a broad field of work for composers, analysts and musicologists. Comprising eleven scenes, *A Floresta* unfolds a narrative full of sound possibilities. The composer states in an interview that his interest in the work of Andresen displayed itself early on (Vilar, 2018). In the musical sphere, trying to understand the writer's work could be a source of inspiration for Portuguese composers. We come across few works, and its use as a teaching resource was rare, or even non-existent, at all levels of education². When we questioned its use as a teaching and musical resource at the Elementary School level, we also realized that there was a gap. So, we began our work trying to understand the pertinence of their work in a teaching context.

Consequently, our investigation started with the study of the homonymous work by Mello Breyner, *A Menina do Mar* (1958), with music by Fernando Lopes-Graça (1961; reissued in 2019). Then, we studied the homonymous works by Bernardo Sasseti (2021) and Edward Ayres d'Abreu (2019), noting the wealth of information contained in the author's text and that

could be explored in the different areas of learning, with an elaboration of a didactic project that gave different possibilities to work in the classroom as our goal.

Having become aware of the existence of other musical proposals based on texts by Andresen, namely *O Rapaz de Bronze* (2007) by Nuno Corte-Real and *A Floresta* by Eurico Carrapatoso, we were quickly inspired to look and develop several tasks supported on them. We were, above all, interested in the musical creations presented by contemporary Portuguese composers, to emphasize an area that has still little attention by cultural institutions and patronage in Portugal. Nevertheless, the composition of a Children's Work is treated as another great job. According to the composer himself, when his work is conceived for a child audience, it is treated as if it were a work for adults. From the point of view of technical and stylistic demands, even when his interpreters are children, the composer states that he does not make any assumptions, whether from a technical, stylistic or aesthetic point of view. According to him: "Writing for children, involving children, is an enriching experience. They do not like to be treated as *tatibitate*" (Vilar, 2018, p. 1).

Carrapatoso makes no assumptions in terms of writing or interpretation. He says (Vilar, 2018) that,

If a score is primarily intended for a younger audience, it must, however, be projected into a broader scope, in which the concept of youth must be sufficiently elastic to be assumed from the age of seven to seventy-seven. [...] The whole must form a suggestive fresco, sufficiently comprehensive to provide a perspective of the human experience and our condition, without masks. [...] It is in the presence of the poetic sense of Sophia's texts, [...], that the child guesses the adult within him/herself. [...] It is also in the poetic themes that the child begins to distinguish the unsophisticated from the subtle, and these works have, in this point of view, a strong pedagogical component, due to the sensibility they contain and the clues they suggest (p. 1).

On a musical level, the work must be impactful to have a strong effect on its listeners. He states (Vilar, 2018) that,

If the orchestra in the pit had been bland, in a first position register, with open strings and such, to make things easier, *A Floresta* would have been, itself, a bland experience, forgotten, because it had started from a fatal error that no one can forgive, especially children: giving in to the easy, to unwary paternalism, to complacency (children hate complacency, knowingly labeling people who are complacent with them as stupid). Only the demand is pedagogical in this environment, because it expresses everything that a human being who is fully fulfilled welcomes in his own conduct of overcoming (p. 1).

Regarding the aspects of the author's work that the composer most values, he states (Vilar, 2018) that,

In the background of my life there is always the misty presence of Sophia: our Aeolian harp full of the fragrance of Autumn, apple and rosemary. We leave her reading hypnotized and go with the wind, with the forest, the sea, the rampant lions in our thoughts. Her poetry has secret charms: facing east, it gently inflects towards the western sea. There dwell the most transcendent landscapes, metamorphosed into a thousand colors and a thousand shades, according to the seasons of the year, from the spring dotted with red poppies and flowering rockroses, exploding into an immaculate white only stigmatized by scarlet sores, plus the flaming yellows of the *maias*, to the autumn of colors sometimes limp of honey browns, sometimes flaming reds of the summer's wrath vines, to the winter purple with cold and heather; summer of the yellows that are toasted in the enchanting undulation of the cornfields, among other chimeras of the long-quixotic time. [...] And in this vertigo of history, we glimpse fighters, silhouettes (some bullfighting and others minotaur), and griffins, and double-headed eagles, plus the retinue of those rampant lions that roar glory and misfortune. The poetic works of Sophia gives us all of this (p. 1).

The author's texts are analyzed and reflected in the composer's work so that their contents are acquired by those who interpret and enjoy them in a pleasurable, but equally forceful and effective way. The texts are used and recreated by the librettists, who shape the text and its basic ideas according to the musical proposal. A musical tale will be different from a children's opera, and a poem different from a book of poems. Regarding the opera *A Floresta*, the composer informs us that he made some changes to the authors' proposal. The changes he makes are fundamental to him, to better express, from a musical and emotional point of view, what he intends to express. In *A Floresta*, the composer says that he made these changes (Vilar, 2018) in scene 3 of Act I, in the mushroom chorus, Carrapatoso repeats (with variations) the chorus from scene 1 ("It's better to lose hope/It's better to run away from here/Isabel, be careful/the dwarves are only bad luck/Go away without delay). Or even in the same scene, he eliminates the line, "Atchim! Atchim!" (p. 2).

In the same sense, Carrapatoso (Vilar, 2018) states that [he] made small changes without any structural effect on the text, *stricto sensu*, and on the narrative, in a broader perspective. These are specific situations and always justified by the essential precedent, I would even say vital: the fact that, in opera, the music and the composer's decisions are sovereign. It is the essential, priority element and hierarchically distant from all the other elements that structure the opera, among which is the *libretto*. And music has its own laws, the only ones that truly matter and which are governed by the first and last helmsman of the journey, because he is unique and irreplaceable in this profession: the composer. In the specific cases cited by you, the recurrence of the material from scene 1 throughout scene 3 has a discursive logic, which has to do with the internal coherence of the music itself, so often based on the varied repetition of the material, a resource so important in the musical form, establishing part of one of its integuments: the affective memory, the skin that makes us recognize its

identity. As for "Atchim", I opted for "Hélas", a *très parfumée* exclamation, by nature more subtle than a sneeze, a percussive, rhythmic and abrupt element, almost philharmonic in its *popolare* mode, which has nothing to do with the feminine subtlety of the music in this precise section, so intimate and sweet, so delicate and filigree. 'Atchim', in this context, would be like a heavily armed jihadist shouting passages from the Koran in the Sistine Chapel: "the boot does not beat the partridge", as the old Portuguese popular saying goes. It is in these cases that the composer decides sovereignly (p. 2-3).

The work, which achieved great success, was the subject of several productions. All of them possible, according to the composer, although the one that comes closest to what he imagined is the production by Nuno Carinhas. His version is, without a shadow of a doubt, the one that is (Vilar, 2018), discreet, sober, non-literal, without any show off, giving interpretative clues to the young audience that filled all those dozens of performances in a theater that was always packed. Yes: giving clues instead of rubbing the story in the children's faces. Without concessions, he did the same. Isn't that what art being, after all? Isn't its function to question-disturb, instead of affirm-soothe? (p. 4) The disquiet is expressed through the musical element shaped into a content and form that disturbs and inquires. He admits that (Vilar, 2018)

I will never forget the expression on the face of a child on his father's lap, who was in the row behind me at the opera's premiere, and who asked him, emotionally and very quietly (in the final scene, so sad, when the dwarf mounts the bird and leaves, after saying goodbye to Isabel, for the northern forests of Jutland): "- Oh father: where did the lobster go?" (p. 4).

A Menina do Mar by Fernando Lopes-Graça, Bernardo Sassetti and Edward Luiz Ayres d'Abreu based on a text by Sophia de Mello Breyner

After learning about Eurico Carrapatoso's work, the discovery of the metamorphosis that Sophia de Mello Breyner's text of *A Menina do Mar* underwent into a musical tale by Ayres d'Abreu took place in 2019. At the same time, the discovery of other versions by Fernando Lopes-Graça, Bernardo Sassetti and Filipe Raposo that roused our interest. By their analysis, we aim to assess the musical, technical and aesthetic solutions they found to understand whether the metamorphosis they established in Sophia de Mello Breyner's imaginary was part of a greater creative purpose or by the wise and rigorous manipulation of the elements that compose and shape the musical discourse. Faced with an intense and peculiar language such as that of Sophia de Mello Breyner, we will investigate to what extent *A Menina do Mar* (re)says and (re)interprets itself in the musical versions that we found, taking shape in new objects of sound, colour and art.

Starting with the analysis of the performance given by Eunice Muñoz about the musical proposal of Fernando Lopes-Graça, we realized that the use of a successful sound design, as

well as a sound and musical plasticity achieved in the materials and sound means proposed, elucidates Mello Breyner's narrative in a lively and effective way. In another, Lopes-Graça's story takes shape in a *Suite* form and in the use of the *Ritornello*. Describing the landscapes proposed by the author through a sound narrative resulting from the manipulation of the timbral palette and a base theme, the composer supports and clarifies the elements of the narrative. The musical elements illustrate the characters and serve as a prelude, interlude or epilogue to the tale. We can see that the sounds chosen, in addition to the sound of the wind, the sea, the storm, the laughter and other material elements, clarify the fact that the entire speech, as well as the different *Ritornellos*, is based on a sound that discloses several musical materials that the composer reveals from the very first moments of the work. This fact gives it uniqueness and a repetitive character. The peculiar use he makes of the distinguished combinations between instruments and sections permits him to describe the narrated scenarios in an effective and always bold way.

The repetitive nature of the melody, the intervals it highlights and its contours, varied, fragmented and continually recovered, will be used to create new materials throughout the different *Ritornellos* and sections of the work. The discourse is predominantly imitative and repetitive, revealing itself as the outline of a style that is seen as uniform. The mastery of the orchestration shows the nature and particularity of the timbres and their combination to be imbued with an aura that ennobles and clarifies the visual content of the narrative, the text, the dialogues, the characters, the emotions and the feelings expressed in *A Menina do Mar*³. The use of sounds from nature that are specific to the natural environment of each scene determines a way of characterizing these environments. Contributing to the fantastic and allegorical nature of sound, images and experiential and emotional contexts, the music, by emphasizing the image, builds another level of meaning for it. It also contributes to a better enjoyment of the content of the work. Within the scope of our project, discussing the sound components of a landscape and its alteration and modification over time provides a greater awareness of the changes that man produces in the environment in which he is inserted.

Menina do mar written by Bernardo Sasseti and declaimed by Beatriz Batarda, will be released on CD by Casa Bernardo Sasseti in 2021 (Sasseti & Batarda, 2021). The album features 13 tracks. In his proposal, the composer masterfully emphasizes Mello Breyner's discourse. By revealing his own speech and language, he allows us to construct a set of visual elements that outcome almost automatically when listening to the text and its musical components. He does so through the sounds created by the manipulation of the textures and sound elements that make up its repetition formulas. The work is based on a sequential set of musical moments numbered from 1 to 13 and titled according to the writer's narrative.

They appear as a complement, but above all, as an element that shapes the mental images conceived⁴. In *Menina do mar*, music, narrative and image cooperate to tell a work that

portrays life and relationships. “No one knows exactly where memory ends and invention begins. I do know, however, that this recording is one of the most beautiful memories that I keep close to my heart, and that I now offer to my daughters Maria, Leonor and Luísa” (Sasseti & Batarda, 2021, n.p.). It is interesting to realize that the proposals that we are highlighting now are built on a desire to offer something to the youngest when the authors become parents⁵. The creative trigger arises from the need experienced in a moment of intimate family life. The offering reflects maternal and paternal love, and the created object always appears tender, kind and, therefore, happy.

When writing the script for the work *A menina do mar*, Edward Luiz Ayres d’Abreu proposes the designation of the form Symphony. He informs everyone, namely its interpreters, musicians and non-musicians, that “All transitions [will] always be gradual, fade-in-fade-out, like a sequence of dreamed moments, with beginnings and ends diluted in memory, or like waves in a continuous back-and-forth” (Ayres d’Abreu, 2019a, n.p.). In addition, he displays some information about the intention of creating its sound component. This author defines three typologies of sound, that are:

atmospheric music, illustration music and epic recitation music. Atmospheric music: when the musical material is predominantly (but not exclusively) constitutive of an emotional and (or) spatial environment. Music-illustration: when the musical material is predominantly (but not exclusively) illustrative of the signs, contexts, facts, gestures, sounds stated textually. Music of epic recitation: when the material is exclusively an inducer of epicenes and serves as an impetus for the recitation (2019a, n.p.).

The typologies Music-atmosphere and Music-illustration are used sequentially and separately, but also simultaneously (see scene IX, scene X – Music-atmosphere/Music-illustration). The typology Music of epic recitation appears only in scene XI. It defines the sound constructed to depict the journey undertaken by the boy and the dolphin across the seas to meet the *Girl of the Sea* (Ayres d’Abreu, 2019b). The show begins with a sound typology of Atmosphere Music, and the room will be dark and gradually lighten as the scene is built, and the musicians will enter and play, little by little (Ayres d’Abreu, 2019a). It is worth noting that the conductor also fulfills the role of instrumentalist by performing a harmonic-producing tempo (Ayres d’Abreu, 2019b).

The work then begins in a “flexible, light tempo, open to the calm flow of the events. Very calm, relaxed, savoring each of the thirteen marked entrances” (Ayres d’Abreu, 2019b, p. 2). The presence of a sound atmosphere created mainly using extended techniques suggests a subtle and diaphanous sound. The use of extended techniques will be transversal to the entire work and to all instruments, enriching the sound component of the narrated and staged text. The richness of timbre and texture emanates from the procedure, as well as from the timbral combinations generated throughout the text and musical context. From the point of view of textures, of greater or lesser density, they appear fluid and transparent in the presented

components. These constituents arise from the rhythmic, metric and temporal manipulation of distended harmonic structures. In addition to this is their change brought about by the interpretation techniques added to them.

The landscapes constructed by the writer benefit from diverse colours in the three records presented. With the elements suggested by Lopes-Graça, Sassetti or Ayres d'Abreu, the images being defined in the sound and visual narrative that are constructed in the imagination of those who enjoy and experience the show are unique. Elsewhere, the richness of the content narrated at the level of social, moral and civic formation can be the trigger for a broader discussion about the environment and the objectives expressed in the Sustainable Development Goals.

The concept of soundscape and its relevance in terms of the relationship with environmental elements

Music is the recording of intentionally produced sounds⁶. The composer thinks of a work and organizes the sounds with an intention. He works to achieve a sound that results and reproduces his initial determinations. Therefore, we can use music that was written over time to study the changes perceived in the behaviors and acuties of its participants. It is worth noting that musicians and composers live in a world, surrounded by sound that affects them in their choices and compositions. Thus, music leads us through two types: absolute and programmatic. In absolute music, composers create soundscapes that come from ideas in their minds.

Absolute music is detached from the external environment and is based on pre-existing musical forms that are designed to be performed in concert halls. The music goes to the concert hall when it can no longer be heard outside of it. Programmatic music, afterward, results from an imitation of the environment and can be described in concert programs. The soundscape, a term used by R. Murray Schafer, is what designates a *sound environment*, the set of sounds that surround us (Murray Schafer, 1986).

The creation of a musical environment of a story tail as resources that outline a Sound and a musical landscape

A literary work, like a musical work, arises from the will of its author. Whispering his skills as a writer or a composer exposes his creative and fruitful capacity to understand the world around him. It also underlines not only the attributes that dictate him as a person, but also its influence on the elaboration of a speech composed of a set of sounds produced intentionally. The result displays the way how he exists, perceives and constructs his identity within the

environment that surrounds and sustains him. Music is, consequently, the fruit of the possibilities that present themselves and are conceived in each time and place.

In this sense, we can use music to study the way in which human beings live, contemplate and enjoy the world around them. We also can study the changes that occur in this world, in the lifestyles and habits of those who produce it. In the same sense, the analysis of the successful perceptions of those who create it is relevant, as well as those who, consequently, conceive and enjoy the work suggested by them (Murray Schafer, 1986). The creation of a narrative with a specific sound environment becomes a challenge, and it can be a didactic resource of undeniable value.

The story and creative writing as a teaching resource

Throughout the suggested narratives, we have seen several contents addressed to those that can be an illustration and a learning tool to study the diverse contents defined in the distinctive Content Areas of the Curricular Guidelines for Preschool Education (Lopes da Silva et al., 2016) and the Essential Learning of the 1st Cycle of Basic Education (1st CEB) (Ministry of Education, 2018). The text offered by the several stories produced by the different authors gives us a set of narratives illustrating aspects of daily life, living spaces, games, adventures and misadventures that cross our daily lives. Present in distinct literary forms and depending on the chosen storyline, they reveal a specific narrative rhythm, allowing the outlining of a musical imagery compatible with the physical and untried space described on them. An analysis of the structure of the sounds contained therein gives us the opportunity to implement a musical practice, an element that outlines a soundscape and will permit the development of various musical skills, namely those expressed at the level of the contents to be acquired in each year and level of training (Lopes da Silva et al., 2016; Ministry of Education, 2018).

To materialize the contents of the outlined artistic project, we proceed to illustrate through excerpts from the work, the elements and facts found in the different areas and domains of knowledge. In this sense, from the beginning of the account, we realize that the elements described are various, alluding to many areas of knowledge and human experience. They can be used in the context of our project, for the introduction and acquisition of different learning in the areas and domains: Area of Expression and Communication - Domain of Artistic Education and the Area of Knowledge of the World (Lopes da Silva, et al., 2016). They also were the subject of analysis to understand how it could be a teaching resource and a methodological and educational strategy.

Through the text, by outlining and implementing an appropriate project, a whole set of acquisitions can be achieved, mainly those concerning music and other arts (painting, dance, scenography, and illustration) (Lopes da Silva et al., 2016; Ministry of Education, 2018). It was

our intention that the project would let us, regarding Essential Learning in the domains of experimentation and creation, make the mobilization of learning aspects in the different areas of knowledge. We also have in mind the assembly of a creative reference by inspiring the collection, through sound recording of different sounds (environmental, natural, vocal, etc.) to include in the project.

Besides, we wanted to develop the creative and reflective capacity of the participants by the creation of an original narrative using the creative writing technique. These stories would be the subject for an alignment of a sound design proposal that would highlight the elements proposed in it. The condition was that they would pour into it, and the content must arise from an interpretation of the environment assumptions and the statements present on the distinct Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The process was long and motivating. The proposals were diverse and illustrate their ecological and environmental concerns. To understand the nature and diversity of the sounds that surround them, a field class was held in the city park, given the geographical space in context. The elements collected were used to produce a sound design, using the texts produced as a context (scientific, social and cultural).

Since the texts present different narrative frames, working groups were created. Also, the scenes and the narrative surrounds to be addressed by each group were defined. This action allowed a better focus on the elements to be created and included in the sound element to be built. They were conscious that it was necessary to create a soundscape that illustrates the narrative present in the text. After identifying the elements of the writing that they wanted to highlight with the sound component, they made a recording of the sounds to be included in the soundscape and its narrative. Strongly motivated, not only by the nature of the proposed project but also using the technologies that support the sound recording and manipulation, they were able to answer our proposal. We found that, despite an initial impasse, distinct projects went ahead as planned, and various tales were presented in the context of the final presentation.

Data Collection Tools

In order to understand the relevance of the outlined project, that is, the use of a major work from the contemporary Portuguese musical repertoire, as well as the works included in the National Reading Plan (NRP) as a trigger for inducing essential learning, data collection tools were constructed and applied, those that we considered to be the most appropriate in the context of the research, that is, the logbook and the questionnaire survey. Regarding the data collected through the questionnaire survey, we noticed that everyone indicated a strong motivation for the construction of the project, an increase in their learning and the hope of continuing this type of work in the future. Thus, we can not only sustain that the project allowed, in our opinion, to stimulate motivation and creativity in relation to the set of required

learning, but also the cognitive, technical-performative, emotional and motivational development of our students. Throughout the time of its construction and implementation, the motivation to do better in terms of their relationship with the living spaces and the environment that surrounds them arises.

Conclusion

The use of works from the classical repertoire, and especially from the contemporary classical repertoire by Portuguese authors, is still scarce in educational and training contexts. As a result of an undeserved disregard or mere ignorance regarding their existence, it is our intention to always highlight their presence as teachers. The research we have been carrying out over the last few years permits us to perceive the richness of this repertoire and the potential it holds as a teaching resource. The works we achieved are supports that let us not only convey a vast set of learning, but also improve the cognitive, technical-performative, emotional and motivational development of children, both at the level of Preschool and Basic Education, as well as at the level of Higher Education, depending on how we look at the identified resource. In our understanding, in addition to being an invaluable teaching resource, they can also be used as triggers for the creation of distinctive artistic projects in an educational context. The acquisition of a set of essential learnings in terms of sound recording and editing technologies, promoting digital literacy, was an inspiring element for the materialization of the final object.

The understanding of the concept of soundscape and its controlled comprehension, based on a narrative constructed from the chosen texts, was decisive for the acquisition of knowledge. The several skills that they acquire in terms of sound analysis and its sound and musical components promote the learning of musical contents. The deep dialogue that was established between the literature resources and music made it possible. It was also essential to develop the imaginary and the skills necessities to construct another experiential and material reality that elucidates and transforms all those who confront it. Seeking a change in behaviors, we believe that these kind of actions in the classroom are important to improve a better consciousness of Environmental Resources and Ambiental Education.

Notes

- i. Some of which are included in the National Reading Plan (NRP).
- ii Even if these books make part of the National Reading Plan.
- iii We notice, for example, the use of the flute/piccolo to characterize the Girl of the Sea. Her friends, the octopus, the crab and the fish are highlighted by their own vocal characterizations, as well as the Great Ray – the King of the Sea.

- iv Girl from the Sea comprises 13 tracks: 1 – Granja Beach; 2 – Girl from the Sea Mov. I; 3 – Granja Beach Perpetual Motion; 4 - Girl from the Sea Mov. II; 5 – The Boy; 6 – Longing Mov. I; 7 – Desire; 8 – Pleasure; 9 - Political Police; 10 - Longing Mov. II; 11 – They Swam Many Days; 12 – The Two; 13 – Girl from the Sea – Epilogue (Sassetti & Batarda, 2021, n.p.).
- v Children's stories appear in Sophia de Mello Breyner's work when the need to entertain and educate her children arises. These concerns are also reflected in Beatriz Batarda's statements.
- vi We must not forget that heritage, whether material or immaterial, also shapes landscapes and soundscapes through the components it provides to the listener and composer, the craftsman and the artist, the performer and the listener, showing what is born in them and is capable of being heard.

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Different Methodologies and the Role of Literary Texts in the Language Classroom

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Abstract

This chapter examines the complexities of language and literature education and emphasizes the institutional inadequacies that hinder effective language learning. It revisits foundational questions regarding the purpose of foreign language (FL) acquisition and critiques traditional methodologies that prioritize grammatical competence over creative and communicative language use. Additionally, this chapter advocates for a more integrated pedagogical approach that recognizes the significance of literary texts in language learning and argues for their inclusion as essential tools for fostering metalinguistic awareness and creativity in learners. This study argues that literature should not be viewed merely as a source of ornamentation or leisure, but rather as a field of knowledge, a domain of work, and a medium for language research. Within the context of language teaching, literature can be understood as both an agent and a product of human development, particularly in the areas of communication.

Keywords

Language Didactic; Literature didactics; Communication; Foreign Language

Introduction

All the inadequacy of the institutional framework inevitably reveals itself across all disciplines, but it becomes particularly evident in the context of language and literature education. The issue of language learning raises a number of fundamental questions, among which we revisit the inquiry posed by Daniel Coste (1980, p 48) - “Pourquoi apprendre des langues étrangères à l'école?” regarding the reasons for learning foreign languages in school.

The specificity of language study naturally entails challenges that are reflected in the dichotomy between Mother Tongue (MT) and Foreign Language (FL).

The growing emphasis on language teaching within the school context has developed its own dynamic, shaped by broader conditions, social and cultural contexts that support the actual practice of language didactics. The teaching/learning situation of a language within an institutional setting can be described as follows: the learner is engaged in a relationship with someone who teaches, with the aim of acquiring content structured within institutionally developed curricula, designed to achieve specific objectives. These are pursued through the completion of tasks, supported by appropriate resources, and oriented toward defined outcomes.

According to Adamczewski (1991), a scholar who advocates for an integrated pedagogy in the language teaching/learning process, the role of the mother tongue in foreign language acquisition has given rise to contrasting methodological positions since the early 20th century. The most opposing perspectives consider either the mother tongue as highly beneficial to foreign language acquisition, or, conversely, as detrimental to the process of appropriating a new language.

This author, states that knowing a language consists of:

- the ability to produce novel utterances, and
- the ability to understand novel utterances that one has not necessarily encountered before.

Creativity, for him, is the fundamental property of language — a property that, at the time, was generally not valued in the context of the mother tongue (MT): “*La LI devient très vite une seconde nature sur laquelle le commun des mortels ne s’interroge pas*”, or [“The mother tongue very quickly becomes a second nature that the average person does not question.”]

The behaviorist explanation — that children learn their mother tongue through imitation — is refuted by Adamczewski, who argues instead that language acquisition consists of a process whereby the child actively constructs the grammar that governs the utterances formed within their environment. It is a process of recreation, a reinvention of the fundamental principles of language.

Unconsciously, the child reconstructs the grammar of their MT, discovering the underlying regularities that define it. In this context, Adamczewski (1991) cites Roman Jakobson, who states that every child is “a linguist without knowing it.”

In a similar vein, for example, in the teaching of French as a foreign language (FL), learners often exhibit a certain theoretical knowledge of the language but feel unable to communicate effectively when real interaction is required. This situation contrasts with that of native speakers, who generally use their language fluently while remaining largely unaware of its

internal structure. In foreign language (FL) learning, the focus was traditionally placed on the accumulation of knowledge.

Although the concept of structure had not been entirely dismissed, a review of language teaching manuals reveals that the ability to manipulate structures was considered one of the main objectives in FL instruction. We must therefore ask ourselves why such a situation occurs, and we shall do so by recalling the threefold question posed by S. P. Corder and E. Roulet (1973). Teaching:

- For whom?
- How?
- Why?

Looking back to the post-war period, we observe that the emergence of a new audience with new communication needs led to a progressive democratization of language education. Previously, the aim was to provide learners with general knowledge and linguistic competence. From a traditional form of instruction — whose primary goal was the written comprehension of literary texts, targeted at a narrow, economically and socially privileged elite — the shift moved towards a direct method, which emphasized everyday spoken and written language, in response to changing audience needs. However, both methodologies remained teacher-centred.

The research of B. F. Skinner (early 1930s) in the United States was later adapted in France. The advertisements of the time were telling. Regarding the Assimil methods: *“Speak English in three months”* and *“Speak English with confidence that you will be understood.”* Jean-Michel Robert (1984, p.12) adds:

[...] si l'on n'assurait pas la compétence de communication en trois mois, c'est que les termes compétence langagière et compétence de communication, alors inconnus, étaient déguisés en une formule miracle: Parlez couramment [...] or [...] if communicative competence could not be guaranteed in three months, it was because the terms linguistic competence and communicative competence, which were then unknown, had been disguised as a miracle formula: Speak fluently [...].

Despite the limitations of Audio-Visual Methods (AVM), it was through their application that, for the first time, the role of spoken language and the communicative function of language was highlighted, leading to a reconsideration of language instruction within schools. As noted in the preface to a well-known audio-visual method:

Le langage est un instrument, un outil: c'est un outil magnifique, mais difficile à manier. Son premier but est de servir, d'être utile. Sans le langage, il n'y a pas de véritable communication entre les êtres: c'est lui qui constitue le code de nos relations [...]. C'est pourquoi nous avons cherché à enseigner, dès le début, la langue comme un moyen d'expression et de communication faisant appel à toutes les ressources de notre être:

attitudes, gestes, mimiques, intonations et rythmes du dialogue parlé or Language is an instrument, a tool: it is a magnificent tool, but one that is difficult to handle. Its primary purpose is to serve, to be useful. Without language, there can be no true communication between people: it is language that forms the code of our relationships [...]. This is why we have sought, from the very beginning, to teach the language as a means of expression and communication, drawing on all the resources of our being: attitudes, gestures, facial expressions, intonations, and the rhythms of spoken dialogue. (Voix et Images de France, 1960, p. 9)

The audio-oral and audio-visual revolutions did not bring unequivocally positive changes, as they focused primarily on methodology and content, rather than on the learner and their needs.

A study conducted by the Council of Europe in the early 1970s on adult language learning needs had the beneficial effect of shifting the focus toward the practical and immediate use of a language, rather than theoretical knowledge about it. As a result, the learning process became centred on the learner. The concept, called communicative competence, is thus distinguished from linguistic competence, which was the main goal of the Audiovisual Methods (AVM), which focused on the production of grammatically correct utterances and well-formed sentences. Beyond this, in the current context of language teaching, it is necessary to take into account the social and cultural rules inherent to any communicative situation. Thus, linguistic knowledge gives way to a form of knowledge that is simultaneously linguistic and sociolinguistic. As a result, the learning process became centred on the learner.

From the 1970s onwards, the four fundamental skills in foreign language (FL) teaching and learning — speaking, listening, reading, and writing — no longer focused exclusively on a single "standard" language. This shift is justified by the varied needs of diverse learner populations within the school setting. The main objective thus becomes the ability to produce utterances that are appropriate to both linguistic and situational co-texts, and to prepare learners for autonomy — for *learning how to learn*.

It is no longer about the neutral language of audio-visual courses or the literary language of traditional instruction, but rather about a living linguistic reality, a system shaped by social contexts and codes, within which literary discourse holds a privileged place.

As Daniel Coste (1973, p. 69) emphasizes:

Dès 1970 lorsque la démarche audio-orale avait été définitivement condamné, au moment aussi où nombre de postulats des cours audio-visuels étaient soumis à un sérieux réexamen, on avait vu revenir au premier plan la notion de communication « authentique », conçue comme moyen autant que simple fin de l'apprentissage [...] or As early as 1970, when the audio-oral approach had been definitively rejected, and when many of the assumptions underlying audiovisual courses were being seriously

reconsidered, the notion of authentic communication re-emerged as a central concern, conceived both as a means and as an end in the learning process.

The communicative approach, in reacting against earlier methodologies such as the Audio-Visual Methods (AVM), tended to obscure the notion of competence in favour of performance. It was the rise of cognitive theories that reaffirmed the possibility of treating language itself as an object of study and analysis.

Given that learners already possess some knowledge of their own language, and naturally demonstrate a curiosity about language, the teacher can – through structured language manipulation activities – encourage learners to engage in reflective thinking about language itself.

By examining students' areas of interest and motivation at specific age levels, the teacher can better determine how to organize the teaching and learning process. Two key competences - metalinguistic competence and poetic competence - should play a central role in the foreign language (FL) classroom, especially at this developmental stage. The verbal curiosity students exhibit, or can be encouraged to develop, should not go unexploited.

"Competence," in the Chomskyan (1965) sense, can only enhance performance. What remains to be determined is how to integrate cognitive competence, which is undeniably important, within an essentially communicative approach in the FL classroom.

The poetic function was considered an essential element of communication in the model proposed by Jakobson (1960). Teachers in their classrooms often confuse "communicative competence" with mastery of the correct linguistic forms, favoring what Georges Jean (1990) calls "the transparency of language."

The communicative, cognitive, or poetic approach (for example, through storytelling, poetry, or dramatization, where communication is privileged) does not present any contradiction here; on the contrary, it represents a complementarity that integrates the various components of the foreign language learner's profile at this age level.

This is precisely what Umberto Eco (1984) acknowledges when he speaks of the "open work," always susceptible to new readings and interpretations, never exhausted from the point of view of its aesthetic potentials. Symbolic language, the language of literary works, is by nature a plural language, whose code is organized in such a way that any work generated by it possesses multiple meanings, rendering the work irreducible to the situation in which it appears. Literature is an aesthetic object, not merely a historical document.

A text is not merely a sequence of sentences but functions as a higher-level unit whose coherence is ensured by the presence of units of a trans-sentential nature, articulated according to specific combinatory rules. Arguments in favor of not distinguishing between literary and non-literary language are primarily based on the fact that literary texts are, after

all, produced in the same language as all others; although, in this type of text, language is used in a way that can be considered literary, this special use of language cannot be regarded as a language variety. In this sense, Todorov (1973) argues that a structural notion of literature is not legitimate and contests the existence of a homogeneous literary discourse, since literary features also occur outside of literature¹. It has become clear that there are no common denominators for all literary productions, except for the use of language.

What Place Does Literature Hold in Our Schools?

When listening to the voices of those who craft language, the writers, about the influence of School on their literary production, one is left with the impression that School was not the source of their writing. On the contrary, it often remained at a distance, favouring paths aligned with the “standard” language. As students, many of these writers displayed “errors” in language use and were frequently considered underachievers in Portuguese. It is also worth investigating the educational background of most writers, particularly Portuguese authors — though not exclusively. What we find is a diversity of academic paths, rarely rooted in the fields of Languages or Literature.

This might suggest that the teaching of Language and Literature has failed in its mission. That is, the school system has often emptied the literary text of its own language, presenting it in a stereotyped and reductive manner². Based on these premises — which are not intended to revise existing research in this area, but rather to articulate our position — we must ask, with full relevance to the current context: What kind of teaching, and what kind of learning, are we advocating?

Which literary text should be included in the language classroom?

What understanding of the literary text underpins this inclusion?

What forms of literary writing (as student production) should be promoted?

We have identified, as a first key issue, the question of how the literary text should be considered within a pedagogical setting. Our perspective is framed within a textual competence approach, in which the learner’s discursive competence is composed of both communicative competence and textual competence—that is, the ability to construct syntactically and semantically coherent sentences, adapted to specific pragmatic contexts. In this respect, our point of view is necessarily informed by a range of research conducted across different fields — including linguistics, pragmatics, semiotics, sociolinguistics, and psycho-cognitive studies, the latter being of particular interest in our case. According to Hjelmslev (1961) and the structuralist school, the literary text was understood as a closed system, whose analysis deliberately avoided external references, focusing instead on the internal structure of the text itself. The text is thus conceived as a self-contained structure. By

contrast, Gérard Genette (1972) argued that any text may or may not be literary, depending on the mode of its reception – whether it is perceived as a spectacle or as a message.

Jean Peytard (1982) posited that the literary text is generally opposed to all other texts with instrumental or pragmatic functions. In this view, the literary text is associated with the “beautiful,” the “well-crafted,” and the plurisignification, where meaning is dense and layered. Consequently, only the works of canonized authors would merit the status of literary texts. From this perspective, the literary text appears as artificial and of inherently complex access.

Contemporary research has increasingly situated reflection within the study of comprehension and affective memorization, allowing for the examination of how individuals (re)cognize a text as narrative, argumentative, or descriptive in nature. Reading must necessarily be conceptualized in textual and typological terms. One does not read a description, a dialogue, or a poem in the same way, evidently. These different text types or textual sequences presuppose diverse reading strategies and require a range of specific competences. A text constitutes a particular type of message production, defined by its autonomy and closure³.

Due to these two characteristics, and from this perspective, the text stands in contrast to discourse, which is, by nature, open, non-systematic, and too contingent to generate its own code of meanings. As an example, a *récit* (narrative) is understood as a type of text whose closure is particularly specific. As for the many understandings of the literary text, this is not the place for a review of the various definitions or classifications. However, we do wish to recall the perspectives of Jean-Michel Adam, F. Vanoye (1985), Lars Lundquist (1980), and Egón Werlich (1976).

Jean-Michel Adam (1985) argues that the global analysis of texts must be framed in terms of a text typology,⁴ which, for him, is inseparable from a theoretical understanding of textual schemata. These schemata are primarily narrative, descriptive, and argumentative in nature, ensuring the cohesion and coherence of the text as an articulated and hierarchically organized whole.

Following this perspective, such global internal organization, that is, the recognition of textual typology and the mastery of certain global schemata, facilitates cognitive processing, both in the context of French as a First Language (L1) and in that of French as a Foreign Language (FLE). Adam (*ibidem*) further notes that the global organization of texts must be conceptualized across three interdependent levels, namely:

- the pragmatic dimension: *macroacte de discours accompli par le texte ou la sequence*, or the macro speech act accomplished by the text or sequence.
- the global content level: *macrostructure sémantique*, or the semantic macrostructure.

- the schematic level: *superstructure textuelle*, or the textual superstructure.

It is worth noting — particularly in the context of the language classroom — that, in summary, Adam (*ibidem*) considers the identification of different textual zones (narrative, descriptive sequences, more or less extended and homogeneous) as an essential issue. Particularly important is the notion of the “dominant”, to borrow an expression from Jakobson. The main difficulty lies in mastering the mixture of textual types and their respective regulatory mechanisms — *narrative*, *argumentative*, and *rhetorical* — within a single text.

Although firmly grounded in theory, this typology (which Adam further develops) does not appear to conflict with the intuitive recognition of the various text types that teachers routinely engage with in the classroom. Moreover, according to the author, any typological attempt, this or another, can never be so reductive as to disrespect the unique complexity of each discourse.

The history of the literary text’s role in the Mother Tongue and Foreign Language classroom continues to develop, particularly over the last decades. The traditional tendency always privileged the Literary Text as Written Language. It was said that “one speaks like an open book,” meaning that the written, especially the literary written, had special importance over the spoken language.

The Literary Text offered beautiful examples and good models

The literary text, product of creation, led the teacher to propose tasks such as commentary, compositions, essays, much repeated and repetitive tasks, canonical in any exercise or exam, but not justified, and well known.

It was all very “impressionistic”: the texts often selected, the readings, the reading directions, the statements of the tasks set and the evaluations of all that. We well remember our certainties about the expected statements (because they were always there) and, also, our uncertainties after their execution and submission. How would it be graded? Who would grade it?

One could say that the “mark” depended on who was grading, their subjectivity. It was all subjective, like the very act of creation, whose product is the literary text. The course objectives remained in the subjectivity of the materials to be worked with, in the tasks and activities proposed, and in the evaluation later carried out. It is our testimony as a student, notably of Secondary Education, of “lyceum”. It was still the tendency of the Traditional Methodology.

In the 1940s, one discovered that communication was primarily oral, that is, the dominant need was for the spoken language over the written. Justice was done to the place Oral

Language should occupy. By including some parts, and in doing justice to Oral Language, there was felt the need to rethink Written Language differently. Hence, a different view began to emerge concerning the Literary Text (LT), both in the Mother Tongue (MT) class and in the Foreign Language (FL) class.

Thus the literary text gives rise to analyses in the area of phono-morphosyntax: language exercises on vocabulary, grammar generally, and phonology in particular. It was no longer simply a matter of giving the text to read, or, in many cases, not giving the text to read, but splitting it, regrettably, into pieces, which were no longer what the creation had given. Teachers often lamented the destruction of the literary text. It was really mistreated, perhaps even “parroted” in the form of structural language exercises, despite the fact that literary discourse was not the preferred discourse of the structuralists. Great confusions occurred and everything served for structural exercise⁵.

In the traditional trend, up to the 1940s the methods of Reading and text explanation and methods of writing – the essay – dominated all levels of education, from initiation to university. In a too directive line, text explanation tends always to close down rather than open up to multiple readings, as one would expect of a Literary Text. Let us say that to explain the text is to organize ideas around a fundamental idea, around a relation background/form, of content/expression, and of meaning/signifier. The essay task, as an example, is organized around a master idea, which supports all the argumentation, the contrasted ideas in three moments (thesis, antithesis, synthesis).

In Jacinto do Prado Coelho’s (1961) understanding, the literary work is a “*verbal creature woven of words*”. The writer does not use words as mere instruments of verbal communication; he recreates the world within language. Literature appeals to idiomatic knowledge, to practical and vital experience, to sensitivity, to taste, to critical spirit. Literature constitutes a specific system in which ideas, feelings and words, which come from reality, acquire marks and functions of the aesthetic. Language learning should not dissociate – in the context of Foreign Language teaching (which is also our conviction) – the normal use and the artistic or literary use of the language. This is equivalent to saying that literature can and must, necessarily, find an important place in the language teaching/learning process.

On the other hand, more than the Reading of literary texts, considered as a contribution to general culture, appearing when language learning is assured, in advanced levels, the literary text is used as a pretext for lexical enrichment or grammatical practice. More than that, here it seems pertinent the validity of the idea of Reading literary texts as the beginning of the language teaching/learning process, including the use of the literary text as reference also in Language Didactics. In terms of Literary Reading, one recalls, for example, the work of Rice Schofer and Berg (1973) as contrasting with current practices of Literary Text Reading. Oriol-Boyer (1990, p. 57) stated that to analyse a literary text is:

chercher les rapports que les différents éléments- sons, mots, personnages, fonctions, etc., entretiennent les uns avec les autres, car c'est de ces rapports que se dégage la structure fondamentale de l'œuvre et en fin de compte, son sens or to seek out the relationships between the different elements -sounds, words, characters, functions, etc., and how they interact with one another, because it is from these relationships that the fundamental structure of the work emerges and, ultimately, its meaning.

Already in 1982, Jean Peytard (1982, p. 45) suggested to students — future teachers — a different use of the literary text, as a document of observation and analysis, for those who: '*(...) lire le texte littéraire, c'est chercher à percevoir les mouvements même du Langage là où ils sont les plus forts*', or (...) to read the literary text is to seek to perceive the very movements of Language where they are at their most powerful. It becomes evident that a movement of renewal of language didactics is still underway, and this movement associates the literary text with writing expression, broadening the horizons (initial) of language didactics which essentially consecrated oral expression.

Gérard Vigner further recognised, in 1982, that: '*jusqu'à présent de tous les comportements linguistiques liés à l'écrit, seule la lecture a fait l'objet de recherches approfondies et a pu donner lieu à la réalisation d'outils pédagogiques spécifiques*', or '*until now, of all the language-related behaviors connected to writing, only reading has been the subject of in-depth research and has led to the development of specific educational tools*', therefore the practice of studying the literary text should, accordingly, structure a pedagogy of written expression. Then a pertinent question still remains: why reserve such in-depth contact with literary language for advanced levels? It is this question, both in the case of FL teaching and in the case of MT teaching, that arises:

- in both situations, literature is generally reserved for more advanced levels and not so much as an instrument of language learning for learners;
- in both situations, likewise, the activity of Reading is treated separately from Writing with students.

Fundamentally, literature's contribution to language teaching consists in fostering reflection on language itself. What kinds of written productions are requested of our students? In L1 (first/native language), the practice of essays, text commentary, or summaries is still a reality.

In L2/FL (foreign language), literary reading textbooks, conversation books, grammar exercises, French composition texts—all contain writing tasks intended to improve mastery of the language in its various uses- everyday, common, or scholarly. One must highlight the relationship between artistic (literary) writing and the exercise of metalinguistic function, with respect to the didactic virtues of literary writing. On the other hand, for example, Jakobson (1963, p. 213) states that:

les progrès linguistiques de l'enfant dépendent de sa capacité à développer un métalangage, c'est-à-dire de comparer des signes verbaux et de parler du langage or the child's linguistic progress depends on their ability to develop a metalanguage, that is, to compare verbal signs and to talk about language; and, regarding literary writing: "la visée du message en tant que tel, l'accent mis sur le message pour son propre compte est ce qui caractérise la fonction poétique du langage, or the focus on the message as such, the emphasis placed on the message for its own sake, is what characterizes the poetic function of language.

And Oriol-Boyer (1977, p. 26), referring to Jakobson, emphasized:

Celle-ci 'décolle le mot de la chose' et 'le mot est ressenti comme mot et non comme simple substitut de l'objet nommé ni comme explosion d'émotion' or This 'detaches the word from the thing' and 'the word is felt as a word and not as a simple substitute for the named object nor as an outburst of emotion'.

If the didactic function of language is still primarily a communicational one, then literary (artistic) practice facilitates communication, regardless of its creative aspects, so that the literary text, in its possible polyvalence- both in terms of its product and in terms of the process of production, becomes a true experimental laboratory.

Thus, we envisage that the reader of literary texts finds themselves in a situation analogous to that of the foreign speaker facing a text in a foreign language. For example, they should adopt a hypothetical-deductive method and observe the signifier in all its components. Indeed, we accept that

le texte littéraire est une variation langagière unique. Pour chaque texte, un code spécifique est à découvrir or the literary text is a unique linguistic variation. For each text, a specific code is to be discovered, with the expectation that "Il (l'élève) apprend à découvrir l'autre en lui et à accepter plus tard toutes les différences avec les autres or the student learns to discover the Other within himself and, later, to accept all differences with others. It is, in fact, the idea of engaging with the artistic (literary) text as ce qui permet le mieux d'accepter le langage de l'autre dans sa différence or that which best enables us to accept the other's language in its difference (Boyer, 1990, p. 58).

However, it is certain that there exist many difficulties, which we emphasize today, in ensuring that a different language didactics includes how to actualize the artistic use of literary texts. It is important to reflect on these barriers so that they may be mitigated. Some of the situations that persist or others that emerge, for example: under a social ideology, that is, still for those for whom literature will be a sign of recognition, let us say, of an elite; a certain ideology of gift (widespread among literary people, opposed to the whole didactics of artistic writing); a socio-institutional ideology of the literary (how literature is still sometimes taught in our schools); particularly, adequate teacher training; the way Reading is still viewed as separate from Writing; the frequent absence of artistic practice of the language in the classroom.

Changing this state of affairs requires that the specificity of written expression re-acquire its place and status, in conditions of alternation and complementarity. A renewed appreciation of written expression (without de-valuing oral expression) must be linked to the logic that theories of text should be developed with the concept of a living, evolving language, blurring the differences between the linguistic and the literary spheres, so that the domains of language are no longer compartmentalized. The sense of creativity that may be accorded to language didactics should align more with the processes of text elaboration than with text production itself. The issue of written production, which also became relevant in the 1980s, increasingly presumes an approach addressing multiple aspects: pragmatics, cognitive psychology, and genetic criticism.

We know that institutions, such as the *Institut des Textes et Manuscrits* (ITEM/CNRS), have over time developed experiments aiming to establish a theory of the process-of-product, for greater cooperation between the “writer” and the “reader.” For this somewhat interdisciplinary perspective, the so-called linguistics of enunciation contributed necessarily; C. Kerbrat-Orecchioni emphasizes this with regard to research in pragmatics. The theory of enunciation will contribute to a clarification of the pathway of didactics itself, or to a didactics founded on a theory of text writing, where “*l’objet produit, l’énoncé n’est que l’un des paramètres de la production et la théorie ne peut se faire en dehors de celle du procès*”, or “the produced object, the utterance is only one of the parameters of production, and theory cannot be developed apart from that of the process”, according to C. I. Oriol-Boyer (1990, p.59), for whom there will always be “*specificity of the written as opposed to the oral, of the literary text as opposed to the informative text.*”

An artistic practice of writing fosters the development of linguistic competences. However, we realise that it is still difficult to observe the experience of artistic language use in written form within the classroom context. Generally, the practices that are admitted remain those of everyday or academic usage (such as commentary, summary, essay writing, and composition). Thus, in the context of French as a Foreign Language (FL), Gérard Vigner already noted:

Il semble bien que, quelle qu’ait pu être l’ampleur du mouvement de rénovation qui, ces dernières années, a animé la didactique des langues, celui-ci n’a pas touché encore les pédagogies de l’expression écrite (...) En fait, jusqu’ à présent, de tous les comportements linguistiques liés à l’écrit, seule la lecture a fait l’objet de recherches approfondies et a pu donner bien à la réalisation d’outils pédagogiques spécifiques or
It would seem that, whatever the scale of the wave of renewal that has, in recent years, influenced language teaching, it has not yet reached the teaching methods for written expression (...). In fact, up to now, among all the language behaviours related to writing, only reading has been the subject of in-depth research and has led to the development of specific educational tools. (Vigner, 1982, p. XX).⁶

Regarding the way the issue of the literary text (LT) in the FL classroom has been addressed, one must mention the work coordinated by Jean Peytard (1982). This document resulted from a series of seminars held over three years under his guidance, within a project also involving Louis Porcher and Jacques Cortès. Its main objective was to analyse the function of the literary text in FL teaching by reflecting on multiple perspectives proposed by different scholars.

At that time, the project was structured around three major axes:

- to analyze the existing works, in the context of FL teaching, to understand how the literary text has been proposed and treated — either as an authentic document or as a sacralized text, often presented as a mediated object;
- to identify, through surveys, the attitudes and distinguish the viewpoints of both teachers and learners regarding literary texts in the process of language teaching and learning;
- to consider the literary text as an “*objet-produit*” (produced object) that gives rise to multiple, variable, and plural readings.

The aim was to understand this “*language space*”, again in the words of Roland Barthes:

Writing establishes the text as a prodigious and astonishing linguistic laboratory, where one has the opportunity to observe and understand what a language truly is. Conceiving literature as the product of language in action should make it possible to reconcile language teaching with literature (Barthes, as cited in Peytard, 1982, p. XX).

This initiative was not intended to propose a specific method of literary text analysis, but rather to promote ongoing reflection on the specificity of literary language.

Notes

i Todorov, T. (1973). *Literature and meaning*. Assírio & Alvim.

ii The types of productions requested—such as the dissertation, the essay, and the composite commentary—reduce the scope of expression for the learner. For this reason, writers forget about school when talking about the magic of spontaneous and diverse encounters with a book, whether through a familiar bookshelf at home or through the intermediary figure of a mother, a grandmother, or someone who, every day, expanded their imagination with their retellings.

iii From Henault’s perspective, in *Les Enjeux de la Sémiotique*, the understanding of autonomy is what enables the comprehension of the text as an isolable whole, presenting a sufficiently homogeneous semantic content in order to forge its own code. Conversely, closure (as a complementary notion to autonomy) posits the text as having a beginning and an end, thereby manifesting a directed coherence (the dimensions of the text are irrelevant—a single cry can constitute a text, as can three sequenced words: *veni, vidi, vici*). Consequently, the text emerges from a closed structure, where its constituent parts are not random.

iv Adam, J.-M. (1985). Quels types de textes? [What types of texts?]. Le Français dans le Monde, (192). Hachette-Larousse.

v Benannou, M. (1982). Écrire (DLE Collection). CLE International.

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Teaching Tagore Dance to Underprivileged Students in a Secondary School: Fostering Creativity and Cultural Awareness

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Abstract

To philosopher and educator Rabindranath Tagore, like many other arts, dance plays a crucial role in fostering creativity, freedom of expression and all-round development. Resonating with his philosophy, emphasis has been given to art education including dance in secondary school in West Bengal, India. In this chapter, I explore the significance of Tagore dance, popularly known as Rabindra Nritya, in fostering holistic growth of students in a government-sponsored secondary school in West Bengal. I discuss the impediments faced while introducing dance to socio-economically and culturally marginalized students. Despite these challenges, teaching Rabindra Nritya to students demonstrated positive impacts on their self-esteem and confidence. Through classroom observations and personal interactions, the study also argues that the facilitator can enhance cultural awareness and enrich the lives of underprivileged students. Based on my experiences both as a researcher and as the institutional leader about the positive aspects of teaching Tagore dance to the school students, I recommend its inclusion for the holistic development of the secondary school students, whether as an extracurricular activity or even in an interdisciplinary way. The chapter adds to art education as well as inclusive pedagogy, particularly in the South Asian context.

Keywords

Dance Education; Holistic Learning; Inclusion; Tagore dance

Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore, a renowned figure in Indian literature and education, enunciated educational philosophies that emphasized the importance of cultural awareness, freedom of expression and holistic development (Dasgupta 2020; Chatterjee, 2022). As the first Nobel laureate of colonial India, Tagore believed that education should nurture creative understanding of different cultures and a sense of universal humanism (Roy, 2015). He invited creative individuals from around the world to come together in his self-founded school in Shantiniketan, which later became Viswa-Bharati University (Birbhum District of West Bengal, India). Like many other arts, Tagore viewed dance as a powerful medium of self-expression and advocated for its inclusion in educational institutions to foster creativity, autonomy in self-expression and wholeness.

Originating in Shantiniketan, Tagore's dance (used interchangeably with Rabindra Nritya here) form has eventually become popular as Rabindra Nritya in Bengal and beyond. To nurture the whole child with moral and spiritual development along with intellectual growth, emphasis has been given to art education including dance in contemporary secondary schools of West Bengal in India. Since Rabindra Nritya is deeply interwoven with Bengali culture, the cultural activities and festivals often incorporate Rabindra Nritya in schools in Bengal. Aligned with the governmental policies, dance practice was introduced in this government-sponsored secondary school, located on the outskirts of Kolkata. However, the major hindrances remained due to a lack of participation and infrastructural foundations. As a facilitator, I observed that underprivileged students often struggled to understand the aesthetics of Tagore dance. Parental and community resistance was another major hindrance in teaching, as dance is not taken as a respectable pursuit, especially for girls. These difficulties have not been addressed before. Given this, the chapter discusses problems faced while introducing dance to culturally marginalized students and explores the significance of Rabindra Nritya in fostering holistic growth of students.

The practice of Tagore song and dance has been interwoven with the ethnic identity of refined taste within the West Bengal State. For this, Tagore's educational philosophies resonate with the national and state-level educational policies of the country, particularly the National Education Policy (NEP), which advocates holistic and inclusive education. The NEP 2020 mentions: 'The education system must aim to benefit India's children so that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of circumstance of birth or background'. The NEP also recommends the inclusion of 'basic arts, crafts, humanities, games, sports and fitness, literature and values' (NEP 2020). Therefore, NEP echoes Tagore's vision of accessible art education and fostering a more equitable learning environment for children in India.

Following the *National Council of Education Research and Training* (NCERT) guidelines, the *State Council of Education, Research and Training* (West Bengal) has developed a state

curriculum for the government-aided schools of West Bengal, whose primary goal is to foster creativity, cultural awareness and balanced development in students through hands-on activities like drawing, music, dance and drama. Consequently, the *West Bengal Board of Secondary Education* lists music and dance classes along with other activities as part of the school's offerings to produce a diverse range of activities for students. Therefore, in educational institutions, Tagore's ideals are woven into cultural programmes for fostering creativity and holistic development. While both governments aim to foster creativity and cultural engagement, its effectiveness may be hindered due to inconsistent implementation across schools.

Over the past two decades, Rabindra Nritya has been incorporated into our cultural events and celebrations. However, the societal stigma hindered students' participation and enthusiasm, creating barriers to the holistic development that Tagore envisioned. The main questions that the chapter looks at are: what strategies did the facilitator adopt to overcome the impediments? Which aesthetics were cultivated to bring socio-cultural awareness? To investigate these queries, the chapter explores how dance movements and Tagore's dance dramas uphold creativity, freedom and joy of rhythm. Furthermore, it discusses what social, economic and cultural impediments were faced in this context. Drawing on Tagore's idea of holistic education, it is contended that facilitators can play a vital role in promoting cultural awareness and freedom of expression. Further, it is argued that this journey can lead to mutual learning and transformation, finally enriching the lives of students in the context. The chapter adds to both art education and inclusive pedagogy, particularly in the South Asian and postcolonial context.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative case study method, incorporating elements of both action research and ethnography.

Setting

The research took place at a government sponsored secondary school on the outskirts of Kolkata, with approximately 200 students from socio economically disadvantaged curricular dance programme background. It is a Bengali medium girls' school having grades from 5th to 10th. The school has both indoor and outdoor settings for dance sessions. School hall, ground, courtyard, and open-air space were used, aligning with Tagore's emphasis on learning through nature. The implementation of art education in West Bengal government schools is marked in the school's timetable as "*Ananda Parisar*" (*Joyful Environment*). Dance sessions are embedded into weekly periods.

Participants

Interested students irrespective of castes and religions were taught Tagore dance. The participants were girls aged 13 -15. They were of mixed religion and the majority came from Bangla-speaking families. Most of them were from underprivileged class and communities listed in the governmental gadget as scheduled caste (SC), scheduled tribe (ST), other backward (OBC) and minorities (Muslim community). Most of the students never had encountered Tagore's works or had exposure to formal dance training.

Teaching method and content

In our school, dance programmes were organised for *Basontoutsob* (Spring Festival), *Rabindra Jayanti* (Tagore's birth celebration), *Brikhyoropan* (Tree Plantation) and *Kanyashree Prakalpa* (Girl Child Well-being Scheme), among others. On such occasions, Tagore's compositions and dance-dramas were taught to students using the freestyle method. Dance was taught mostly by the learning-by-doing method, and students were encouraged to create movements of their own.

Data collection and analysis

This qualitative study includes unstructured observations of classroom teaching-learning sessions, rehearsals, performances, videos and informal conversations. Qualitative data collection methods involved unstructured interviews and in-person observations collecting data, which were subjected to narrative analysis. Field notes and informal conversational data were coded in an inductive manner through which broad themes emerged in the domains of creativity, joy of rhythm, confidence, cultural awareness, emotional outbursts and inclusion. I adopt the narrative approach to analyse students' stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) and layer my discussions with other pedagogical findings. I translated students' voices from Bangla to English while keeping their intentions accurate.

Research Positionality

Both as a facilitator and a researcher, I occupied an insider position. Despite allowing for a deep engagement with the participants, it necessitated critical self-reflection to minimise potential bias in how things were interpreted.

Reliability

To establish credibility, narratives were reviewed by a neutral academic colleague (dance studies).

Ethical considerations

Informed consent was obtained from the students and their guardians. All names used here are pseudonyms, and any identifying information has been removed. This research followed ethical guidelines for working with minors.

Tagore's educational philosophies

Tagore's educational vision emphasizes the importance of developing well-rounded individuals. This principle is echoed in his article *Sikshar Herfer*, where Tagore argued that 'the ultimate aim of education should be the all-round development of an individual for harmonious adjustment to reality' (Tagore quoted in Jalan, 1976, p. 8). In another essay, *The Religion of Man* (1931), Tagore envisioned a holistic educational philosophy that nurtures learners through harmonious integration of intellectual, emotional and spiritual development.

Tagore placed immense value on creating a joyful learning environment where students could connect their inner selves with the world around them through music, dance, and other cultural activities. His philosophy is strongly aligned with the principle of inclusive education, specifically through its focus on incorporating art as a means of self-expression and universal communication. Until today, the arts—fine arts, dance, music, theatre—have a place of honour at Tagore's Shantiniketan, where children learn about an inherent love of freedom, humanity and creativity through these art forms.

What is more important is that Tagore considered the arts not just as extra-curricular activities but as integral to the growth of a child's mind and sensibility. To him, art plays a crucial role in fostering creativity, freedom of expression and holistic development of an individual. Among the various forms of artistic expression, dance holds a unique place in art education, combining physical movement with emotional and intellectual engagement. Tagore believed the language of sound and movements to be the highest means of self-expression, without which people remain inarticulate. While musing on Tagore's idea of rhythm, the veteran Rabindrik (Tagorean) singer and dancer Shantideb Ghosh wrote that Tagore considered dance as the artistic movement of the body. Tagore trusted the immense power of dance and hence advocated dance in educational framework for celebrating nature and also fostering personal and communal growth. He introduced lively dance movement in tune with the joyful and holistic education system of Shantiniketan (Ghosh, quoted in Bhattacharya, 2024).

Created by Tagore, Rabindra Nritya, the 'first modern dance' of India (Bose, 2008), is a fluid dance form that incorporates elements from Indian classical dances (Manipuri, Kathakali, Bharatnatyam etc), folk traditions (Baul, Raybeshe etc), Southeast Asian folk dances such as

Javanese and Balinese and even Western dance forms (Ghosh, 1983; Bose, 2008). The joy and freedom come from its choreographic designs as an exploration of emotions and storytelling. Unlike the rigidly structured classical dances of India, Rabindra Nritya in contemporary times encompasses an inclusive dance vocabulary emphasising cultural openness and faith in diversity. Scholars have engaged with Tagore's concept of inclusion in dance, highlighting how Rabindra Nritya serves as a bridge among different cultural expressions in classrooms in the global context (Banerjee & Baker, 2019).

From the above, it can be argued that both Tagore's educational and dance philosophies share a common ground of inclusion and holistic development of individuals who can express themselves fully in intellectual and artistic domains. Yet, they differ in their specific focus: while his educational philosophies encompass a broader spectrum of artistic expressions, dance philosophies focus on the expressive and transformative power of movements and emotions. Together, they stress the nurturing of the whole person through a joyful environment, encouraging them to connect with themselves and the world around them.

Initial Hindrances

In a school where most of the students are from underprivileged backgrounds, teaching Tagore dance revealed some socio-cultural, infrastructural, and pedagogical impediments. Due to lack of exposure, often their performances suffer from lack of expressions. Moreover, structural impediments such as lack of auditoriums, audio systems or costumes, pose a major problem in the implementation of this art form. Lack of dance spaces at their houses also acts as a major problem to practice dance for our cultural programmes.

The cultural stigma associated with participating in a dance performance within conservative communities is a principal impediment. I drew on the case of a student of class V from the Muslim community to support this. She told me: 'If anyhow my father comes to know about my participation, he will not spare me. He will scold and beat me up, as in my community dance is not acceptable'. To encourage participation, I cited the example of a Bollywood choreographer named Farha Khan and other Muslim superstars while mentioning the artistic richness of dance in a community. These exchanges recognise the role of dialogues and media in overcoming cultural resistance against the art of dancing proved effective, as the student returned with newfound enthusiasm and permission from her father. The findings resonate with Pinar's (2004) thesis, which defines pedagogy as complicated conversations and not a fixed entity.

Financial barriers are another major impediment in this context. Lack of money restricts the students' participation, as they fail to buy accessories needed for the performance, as demonstrated by a girl of class five named Rimi, who expressed her desire to perform at the School Annual Day yet could not afford the cost of a red saree with a silver coloured-border.

She was overwhelmed with tears when she could not afford the jewellery due to her family's financial condition. Such hindrance indicates the disparity between Tagore's idealistic educational idea about situating dance education as a mainstream subject and the emotional vulnerabilities faced by students and educators alike.

To alleviate these challenges, some teachers have taken proactive measures—such as creating a storage room of costumes and raising funds—nevertheless, gaps between educational ideals and practical realities have remained stark.

Rabindra Nritya as an educational tool

In this section, I discuss how Tagore's educational philosophies and practice inform each other for students' all-round development. In doing so, I situate my analysis within the broader framework of educational research to see how it is informed by contemporary pedagogical theories.

Teaching Rabindra Nritya to marginalized students embodies Tagore's vision of holistic education rooted in inclusivity. Despite facing socio-cultural and infrastructural challenges, the positive impact of dance education on students' confidence, emotional expression, and overall development is significant. In the school, dance is practised as a co-curricular activity, enhancing the student's soft skills and overall personality. Over two decades, students' feedback and participation have indicated that they feel more connected, heard, and confident, illustrating Tagore's notion of holistic learning in action. As seen, dance becomes not merely a creative expression for them but a pathway to becoming a whole person, transcending traditional academic boundaries. They learn to be empathetic and caring for peers, developing a sense of belonging. This is crucial for community building.

Broadly, the method includes exploration of movements through storytelling, rhythms and emotions. From my class observations I noticed that the learners who had been quiet in the beginning, moved their hands and feet freely with encouragement. This change implies the power of reinforcement in overcoming initial reluctance. They can confidently express what they feel not just in the dance classes but even in family settings. One of my students exclaimed 'I feel more confident in speaking up after I engaged myself in dance classes. Now I can say that I can try, and that's new for me'. The experiences of students highlight the transformative power of art in education, affirming that dance is a vital tool for fostering creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. It significantly enhances their self-esteem, confidence, social belonging and emotional expression, abiding by Tagore's educational philosophy.

Most of the learners felt that their involvement in dance classes boosted their confidence levels. Very often my students express their love for dance, as it makes them happy and joyful.

The free and natural environment of dance classes, as opposed to the confinement within the four walls of the classroom where they have their academic classes, attracts the learners. They eagerly anticipate joining the open-air dance classes. I observed: 'As soon as the bell rang for the dance class, the students of fifth and sixth grades would rush to me and ask, 'Ma'am, *aj nach sekhaba na?*' ('Won't you teach us dance today?', my translation). With my encouragement, they moved freely, enjoyed practising dance, innovated movements, and expressed their emotions on their own. The above eagerness of the students indicates the positive impact of a free and natural learning environment on student engagement, joy and well-being (Figs. 1a, b). Such positive responses unveil the truth that Rabindra Nritya can definitely boost up their confidence and well-being. This practice of teaching-learning is consistent with William Doll's (1993) study that supported a non-linear, flexible and an open art-based curriculum aiming maximizing learning outcomes.

The free style teaching method was employed, prioritizing student comfort and self-expression over fixed choreography. Students were explicitly told that there is no wrong way to move or to express oneself. I always feel that starting with fixed choreography will scare the students. So, I tell them, 'Feel the song and move as your body tells you', and they feel overwhelmed. And their responses were: 'Honestly, it felt free', 'These movements made me feel connected to my body', 'Sometimes, I felt shy in the beginning, but the group encouraged me' and 'I thought I could never dance, but I know that I can'. By inviting everyone to share how they feel the class, they were empowered (Fig. 1b).



Fig. 1a Student engagement through movements. Fig. 1b Solo movement

Scholars, such as Banerjee & Baker (2019), have explored Tagore's concept of inclusion in dance and revealed how Rabindra Nritya allows dancers from other cultures the freedom to

improvise their movements. Though their study was situated within the educational context of a US Midwestern university with dance major and minor students, the present study was set in a more localized educational institution with minor participants less acquainted with dance. But both studies reflect the power of Tagore dance as an educational tool in real-world educational settings, showcasing its prospect in creating inclusive and empowering learning environments.

The learners either learn by doing or create their own space, aligning with the concept of Tagore's joy and freedom in dance. They were given maximum liberty to improvise their movements. They were encouraged to convey the theme of the song freely in their own way, enhancing their inner freedom. As observed, the learners also enjoy doing dance to Rabindra Sangeet (Tagore song) *mamo chitte niti nitye ke je nache* (*Who is it that dances perpetually in my heart?*, my translation, Fig. 2). In tune with the upbeat rhythm of the song, when they dance with vigorous steps followed by a swift jump, they feel the joy of rhythm. Their delightful performance with vibrant movements and free gestures makes them happy; the joy of rhythm is also transmitted to the audience, leading to aesthetic relish (known as *rasa*).

The student shared with me that as she and her peer were rehearsing a duet outdoor, she saw that her friend stumbled at the start. So, she encouraged her to feel relaxed and assured her that she could do the steps correctly. Her supportive words made her friend feel safe and valued. The function of art, evoking a sense of unity and universal fraternity among the students, resonates with Tagore. Students' reports of feeling liberated and confident imply the therapeutic benefits of artistic expression.



Fig. 2 Joy of rhythm

In my recent class observation of the dance, *fagun haway haway korechhi je daan* ('I offer myself to the beauty and changing winds of spring', my translation), I was struck by the palpable joy that the learners demonstrated through movements. I further noticed that they placed their hands on their waists and swayed them synchronising with the tempo of the music (Fig. 3). Unlike the previous dance, the gush of spring breeze is reflected in their soft steps and swirling body movements. I also watched that the movements varied with tempos: sometimes their footwork was quick with small steps, while other times, they moved together in a group, stamping heavily, creating a dynamic interplay of energy. By fostering an environment where fixed choreography is eschewed in favor of improvisation, students are liberated to express their emotions through movements. This approach not only enhances their connection to their bodies but also cultivates a sense of community and support among peers, as evidenced by their enthusiastic responses to the freedom of expression. The positive feedback from students—ranging from feelings of liberation to newfound confidence—indicates the therapeutic and uplifting nature of dance.



Fig. 3 Expression of wind using hands and rhythm

In recent informal conversations with my students, the impact that Tagore dance has had on them was evident. After the practice sessions, a student stated, 'No one in our family ever did dance; my mother works in the fields, and my father is away. But in the dance class, I learned a lot about Tagore dance. It's like I step into another world'. Another student expressed, 'Before the dance classes I didn't know how to express my feelings with my hands and face. Now I try to feel the song and accordingly express the emotions'. Their newfound enthusiasm to connect with Tagore's works leads to their cultural awareness as well as preservation of their own culture. Such realizations indicate the life-changing impact of dance as an

educational tool. Nevertheless, they also raise questions about the role of dance in society, specifically in communities where this art is not valued and practised.

Student enthusiasm is evident through their active participation in various school programmes, performing solo and group dance with Rabindra Sangeet, thematic dance presentations with scripts on Tagore's dance-dramas, including *Riturango*, *Borsha Mongal*, *Bosonto Abahon*, *Abhisar*, *Pujarini* and other adaptations of his creations. Students also demonstrate independence in decking themselves up with costumes (often provided by me and the other teachers), makeup and jewellery, attuned with the theme of the songs (Fig. 4). Additionally, there is a substantial increase in their awareness about their primary health and hygiene. These engagements showcase their artistic talents and also indicate their growing sense of social responsibility and self-care.



Fig. 4 Different costumes

While teaching the opening dance of *Bosonto Utsab* (spring festival), *Ore grihobashi khol dwar khol laglo je dol* ('O the city dwellers! Open your doors as the spring celebrating the festival of colours has arrived'), I encouraged every student to engage in the movements, allowing their bodies to respond to the song and its meaning, as this festival heralds the arrival of spring. Dance costumes and makeup that reflect the value of tradition and rituals were meticulously taught. In this year's celebration, the students beautifully draped in yellow sarees with appropriate makeover and flower ornaments truly revealed the essence of the season of spring (Fig. 5a). After the dance, the students sprinkled *abeer* (coloured-powders), urging each one to infuse the season with one's unique colour (Fig. 5b). Such activities not only instilled an appreciation for nature's beauty but also honed their artistic (sound and rhythm) and aesthetic sensibilities (colour and appropriate makeover), moulding their personality. These findings align with Eisner (2002), who argues to innovate curriculum for valuing aesthetic modes of knowing and multiple intelligences. Additionally, our students were informed about their cultural history and the social knowledge of the region through *basontoutsab*. This is consistent with the finding of Anabela Moura and Gabriel Barbosa (2018) as they comment that art plays an important role in deepening cultural, historical and social knowledge of students.



Fig. 5a Students perform in open-air

Fig. 5b Spring Festival

Along with preserving cultural heritage, this sense of communal harmony enriches learners' lives in this context. This echoes the observation of Faria Pedro et al. (2018) in another educational setting of Northern Portugal, where they argue that the teachers of arts, history, tourism and technology of higher and basic education institutions prioritise cultural heritage through the lens of interdisciplinarity to rediscover the local culture.

Additionally, the participation of my students in inter-school dance competitions or in public cultural centres enables them to develop public visibility, which in turn, helps them to establish their identities in a society where they were unwelcome before. When Dalia, a

student of class X performed boldly in a local programme with the song from Tagore's dance-drama *Chitrangada*, *aami chitrangada, ami rajendronandini/ nohi debi, nohi samanya naari* ('I am Chitrangada, the daughter of a king/Neither a goddess, nor a commoner', my translation), she actually found her voice and identity in a social platform. Through the depiction of the character Chitrangada, who rises above and beyond the stereotyped gender roles, the learner with her gestures asserted her feminine strength. She expressed her inner conflict using *suchi hasta*, a codified hand gesture from tradition. Along with her facial expression, the student's gesture implied that her own individuality and self-worth were more authentic than superficial, feminine beauty (Fig. 6). Thus, by identifying with the character, she made dance a tool for self-assertion in a society that rose above the societal norms of positioning a woman as subjugated. This aligns with the study of Anabela Moura and Gabriela Barbosa (2018), which argues that art acts as a powerful active strategy of teaching social education and plays an important role in deepening cultural, historical and social knowledge of students and the development of a better understanding of the world.

Elsewhere, while expressing the emotions in Tagore's dance-drama, *Chandalika*, a student related her struggles to the protagonist, Chandalika, an untouchable woman who struggles to break the barriers of caste, embarking on a journey from self-doubt to self-knowledge. When this dance drama was introduced, Rozina identified herself with the character as a member of a marginalized community and shared: 'Ma'am, you know, in our neighbourhood the Hindus and the Muslims are enemies to each other, but we never feel like this in the class. We are friends here. We dance together and enjoy the class'. This voice indicates that despite the religious discrimination between the Hindus (majority) and the Muslims (minority) deeply rooted in the society, dance can eradicate such religious discrimination, thus promoting inclusivity.

In Fig. 7, using her bold facial expressions and hand gestures, the performer established her strength and questioned the social hierarchies where the marginals are looked down upon. The overall process reflects Tagore's vision that dance not only can be a tool for nourishing emotional intelligence but also a vehicle for social change. Rising above their social boundaries, both the students (enacting as Chitrangada and Chandalika) explored emotions and (class and gender) identities through the characters, which echoes Anne Harris's (2016) argument that the arts provide affective access to knowledge that traditional methods overlook. On the other hand, such embodiment of the characters allowed the learners to understand societal hierarchies and injustices prevailing around them, echoing Susan Stinson's study (2016) that integrates curriculum theory with affect, identity and movements.



Fig. 6 A self-assertive pose in Tagore's *Chitrangada*



Fig. 7 Bold stance and facial expression of the protagonist (sitting on the ground) in Tagore's *Chandalika*

The Path Forward

In conclusion, while the integration of art education, particularly Rabindra Nritya, into the curriculum of marginalized communities presented initial challenges, it also offered significant opportunities for holistic development. Embracing Tagore's philosophy of education, the journey towards fostering creativity and freedom of expression in underprivileged students can lead to mutual learning, adaptation, and transformation, ultimately contributing to their overall growth as individuals. The diversity in their performances not only showcased their growing confidence and willingness to express themselves freely and creatively but also cultural awareness, pride and identity. By addressing socio-cultural and infrastructural impediments and leveraging the role of facilitators, dance education can become a powerful tool for inclusion and empowerment. Based on my experiences both as a researcher and as an institutional leader, I recommend the inclusion of dance for the holistic development of our secondary school students, either as an extracurricular activity or through an interdisciplinary way. I believe that dance training would substantially improve if we focus on infrastructure and teacher training programmes. Thus, I recommend providing more resources for the propagation of dance education. In the future, I will ensure the inclusion of more students and teachers in various dance projects.

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Poetic Text at the Confluence of Drama Education and Literary Education

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Abstract

The project 'Poetic Text at the confluence of Drama Education and Literary Education' was developed in the context of Initial Training in Basic Education at the Institute of Education of the University of Minho (Braga, Portugal). It sought to highlight the transversality of the Portuguese language, broadening contact with literary modes whose reception is apparently less generalised (poetic and dramatic/theatrical). In this context, from the confluence of Drama Education and Literary Education, we explored the phonological and interpretation possibilities inherent in the contexts of the poetic text and realised how reading could contribute to improving linguistic skills, the ability to deconstruct the text, the development of imaginative capacity, the production of knowledge and the addition of culture.

Keywords

Drama Education; Literary Education; Poetic Text; Initial Teachers Training

Educational value of poetry

Poetic language challenges the imagination through the freedom it suggests in playing with words and their meanings. The encounter with poetry, through the polysemy that the poem carries within itself, encourages reflection, play and fun. By appropriating the poet's text, the student plays with the images of the poem, deconstructing it, reconstructing it and

discovering the playful meaning of poetry, in the recreation and search for new meanings of the text. And it is in this creative freedom that poetry sustains the imagination that springs from it and relates to other forms of art. Hence, the child's encounter with poetry should be mediated by someone, be it a family member or a teacher, who enjoys reading this literary genre and who knows how to recognize its contribution to the development of the child's imaginative capacity and the production of knowledge. And if this mediation is adequate, "the images that a poem generates in a child are capable of perpetuating themselves in the child's memory, leading the student to recognize themselves as a unique and social subject" (Espeiorin & Ramos, 2009, p. 3).

The metaphorical world that poetry portrays, whether real or not, aims to capture people's imagination and provoke sensations. As Espeiorin and Ramos (2009, p. 3) point out, children's and young people's poetic texts provide "multiple and unusual images, provoking the child reader and allowing them to travel and reflect". On the other hand, as Cortesão (2012, p. 27) highlights, they provide the development of skills in terms of mastery of language and reflective thinking, attention and concentration, "learning to listen", consolidating reading and text interpretation skills, "exercising different modes of reasoning (such as non-linear thinking, free associations of ideas, critical and philosophical thinking and attention to the rhythm and musicality of words)", as well as developing "alternative forms of multimodal interpretation of the world" (Azevedo, 2012, as cited in Cortesão, 2012, p. 12).

However, reading habits have been declining, leading to a breakdown in the relationship with the written text (Franco, 1999, p. 17). And poetry is often seen as something transcendent, difficult to "decipher", only for a select few, without the majority being willing to really "read" its polysemic, literary meaning (Figueiras, 2013). To counter this trend, schools must be organized as a space of knowledge where students, with the help of teachers, can deepen their knowledge and establish a healthy emotional and intellectual relationship with poetic literature. This can be a way of preventing reading from becoming nothing more than a mere decoding of words, without the student appreciating them, feeling them as their own or being able to grasp the meaning of the text and enjoy its beauty, woven into the words.

But Ribeiro (2007, p. 59) poses the question: "What meaning and usefulness does poetry have for the subject, considered in his individuality, and for civilization?" And he answers, using the words of Sallenave (1997) regarding Literature, where poetry is included, that its function is "to form free men and citizens capable of autonomous judgment". And he continues,

This function cannot fit, as postmodern education wants, into a mentality inspired by ethnicity, group labels, regionalisms and multiculturalism, but in the sharing of texts common to all humanity and making works of a universal nature read that say something to man himself, regardless of his nationality, religion or sex (Ribeiro, 2007, p. 59-60).

Thus, and defending the place of poetry in schools, Ribeiro (2007, p. 62) states that “Generally speaking, theorists and researchers distance themselves from poets for reasons of various natures: because they are aware of the cultural capital that poetry contains and makes possible and because they recognize its pedagogical and educational value”. And he warns that, with regard to the teaching and learning of poetry, “the educational discourse on the poetic text is not situated at the level of its legitimacy, but at the level of the didactic practices of poetry” (Ribeiro, 2007, p. 62).

The school must promote the encounter with poetry from an early age, although naturally adapting procedures to each age group.

The central question will therefore be how to speak, how to teach, how to treat poetry, so that it becomes a discovery and an encounter between the student and himself and others, through poetry (Cabral, 2002, p. 13).

This approach can be a way for teachers to help students expand their command of language and knowledge, so that contact with poetic texts, as Cabral (2002, p. 13) points out, should not be “sporadic, but planned and clarified, well before learning to read”. Ribeiro (2007) highlights the dichotomy between teaching and learning poetry when he questions how to work with this type of text in a pedagogical context, making some considerations regarding its teaching methods in the 1st cycle of Basic Education:

something in disuse, a form of expression culturally distant in time and from everyday contexts, a non-informative type of communication, which is only used in extraordinary situations and which, ultimately, takes us to an unusual communicative sphere, which is not that of students (Ribeiro, 2007, p. 63).

In the work of exploring poetic text, as highlighted by Amaral (2002), the teacher's profile, in terms of text selection and didactic approaches, naturally influences the student's emotional relationship and future bond with poetry.

The enthusiasm we feel about and with the poem is part of reading the poem – and teaching that one can have enthusiasm is, and not only in literature, what a teacher can (and should) do. How? Not by “saying” that it is possible to have it – but by showing how (Buescu, 2002, p. 36).

The teacher should play the role of mediator, without making value judgments about the student's “way of speaking”, nor providing too many explanations or analyses of the poem. His/her commitment and scientific competence, with regard to the selection and strategies for approaching the poetic text, can act, in the classroom context, as a catalyst for collective enthusiasm for sharing the “truth” that each person reads in the text, and this can be the threshold for the formation of future readers who are autonomous, critical and reflective.

poetry reading becomes meaningful when it is followed by a space for exchanges between students and between them and the teacher, of collective creations based

on what is read, which value different negotiations of meaning and invest in the existence of a dialogue as a support for the construction of knowledge and freedom of expression.

To facilitate the valorization and attribution of meaning to what is read, it is important that the teacher establishes reading agreements, with defined objectives, and through these, students will know what the expectations are in relation to the requested reading. Such practices have the potential to expand the repertoire, stimulate the variety of experiences, the formation of critical judgment, autonomy and responsibility of the reader (Tres & Iguma, 2015, p. 2).

Reading and listening to poetry being read produces a kind of enchantment in children (Franco, 1998, p. 70). And alternating between “reading and listening to reading” promotes the dilution of inhibitions in “speaking”, the acceptance of differences and imperfections, and reinforces relationships and communication within the group, becoming, as Cortesão (2012) points out, a factor of individual and collective enrichment.

In pre-reading activities, through the use of exploration games, particularly those involving sharing ‘saying’, other expression and communication skills are acquired, whether in the domain of voice and gesture, visible in body language, or in dramatisation and memorisation skills.

Synergies between Literary Education and Drama Education in the Basic Education Curricular Framework

Although the importance of poetry is widely recognised in children's education (Cerrillo, 2007; Gómez Toré, 2010; Ramos, 2007), it is widely believed that this attribute is not fully reflected in the basic education curriculum (Mendes, 1992; Ribeiro, 2007). In the poetry the guidelines regarding the mastery of poetry, we analyse official regulations for the 1st cycle of Basic Education, seeking links between Drama Education and Literary Education.

In this process, we list a significant set of statements that aim at synergies and could enhance the future teacher's didactic action in approaching the poetic text, but also in an integrated approach to the curriculum, in the use of more creative and diversified teaching strategies through the use of multiple artistic literacies and, no less importantly, in the appropriation of a critical conception of Drama Education that is anchored in the philosophy and educational principles of single-teacher teaching.

To this end, it is important that, throughout their training, future teachers are encouraged to think critically and to scrutinise the intricacies of the official curriculum to identify the appropriate place, situations and skills for teaching each of the literary genres, particularly poetic texts.

The triangulation between the expression of feeling, the expression of emotion, and the word, inscribed in the text, suggests the path to follow in approaching poetry, which is unlikely to conform to the excessive didacticism that commonly characterizes the school approach to poetry. As Souza (2006, p. 47) points out, school practice, by focusing on working with language, disqualifies “the reading of the literal meaning of poetic language and the aesthetic reading of poetry,” thereby contributing to a reductive, mechanistic, and superficial approach to poetic text in the classroom.

However, in “Essential Learning | Articulation with the profile of 1st cycle Portuguese Basic Education students - Portuguese” [Language] (Direção Geral de Educação [DGE], 2018, p. 4), it encourages “literary education through an affective and aesthetic relationship with literature and with oral and written literary texts, through artistic and literary experimentation that includes listening, drawing, reading, writing, dramatizing, performing, reciting, retelling, and appreciating.”

Let us look at the following table, relating to “Essential Learning | Articulation with the profile of Portuguese 1st cycle Basic Education students- Portuguese” (DGE, 2018), in the “AE Domain: Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes”, from which we highlight the “Organizer - Literary Education” for each of the 4 years of schooling.

Table 1
Essential Learning | Articulation with the profile of 1st cycle Basic Education students – Portuguese
(DGE, 2018)

	Essential Learning
	Articulation with the profile of 1st cycle Basic Education students – Portuguese
	AE Domain: Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes
	Organizer - Literary Education
1st Year	“Express ideas, emotions, and opinions generated by actively listening to literary works and texts from popular tradition. Show curiosity and make value judgments about the texts heard. Recognize rhymes and other sound repetitions in poems, tongue twisters, and other texts heard. Anticipate the theme(s) based on basic notions of genre (fairy tales, nursery rhymes, poems, etc.), elements of the paratext, and visual texts (illustrations). Recite tongue twisters, nursery rhymes, and memorized poems in a dramatic way, so as to include training in voice, gestures, pauses, intonation, and facial expression”. (pp. 9-10)
2nd Year	“Listen to literary works and texts from popular tradition being read aloud. Read age-appropriate narratives and poems, either on their own initiative or at the suggestion of others. Anticipate the theme(s) based on basic notions of genre (fairy tales, nursery rhymes, poems, etc.) in elements of the paratext and visual texts (illustrations).

	Explain the meaning of the poems heard or read. Recite tongue twisters, nursery rhymes, and memorized poems in a dramatic way, so as to include training in voice, gestures, pauses, intonation, and facial expression." (p.10)
3rd Year	"Anticipate the theme(s) based on basic notions of genre (fairy tales, nursery rhymes, poems, etc.) in elements of the paratext and in visual texts (illustrations). Understand narrative, poetic, and dramatic texts, whether heard or read. Read poems in public with confidence. Perform dramatized readings of literary works. Express ideas, feelings, and points of view inspired by stories heard or read. Present literary works in public by reading poems and performing dramatic texts." (pp. 9-10)
4th Year	"Listen to literary texts being read aloud and express reactions to reading in creative ways. Read narratives, poems, and dramatic texts in their entirety. Anticipate the theme(s) based on basic notions of genre (fairy tales, nursery rhymes, poems, etc.) in elements of the paratext and visual texts (illustrations). Understand the internal and external organization of poetic, narrative, and dramatic texts. Understand resources that emphasize the meaning of the text (onomatopoeia, puns, interjections, comparisons). Dramatize texts and recite memorized poems in public with expressiveness and confidence. Participate responsibly and cooperatively in performances of dramatic literary texts. Express ideas, feelings, and points of view inspired by stories or poems heard or read". (p.9)

The "Literary Education Organizer" for each of the four years of schooling is interconnected. In the first year, the "Literary Education Organizer" encourages teachers to guide students toward discovery and development through the possibility of "Expressing ideas, emotions, and appreciations generated by actively listening to literary works and texts from popular tradition"; "Revealing curiosity and making value judgments about the texts heard"; "Recognizing rhymes and other repetitions of sounds in poems, tongue twisters, and other texts heard"; "Anticipating the theme(s) based on elementary notions of genre (fairy tales, nursery rhymes, poems, etc.), elements of the paratext, and visual texts (illustrations).

And there is a continuum in this strategy. In the 2nd year, the following is proposed: "Read age-appropriate narratives and poems, on one's own initiative or that of others"; "Anticipate the theme(s) based on elementary notions of genre (fairy tales, nursery rhymes, poems, etc.) in elements of the paratext and visual texts (illustrations)"; "Explain the meaning of poems heard or read"; "Recite, in a dramatic way, tongue twisters, nursery rhymes, and memorized poems, in order to include training in voice, gestures, pauses, intonation, and facial

expression.” In the 3rd grade, the same Organizer proposes, among other items, “Reading poems in public with confidence” and “Performing dramatic readings of literary works.” In the 4th grade, among others, we highlight “Dramatizing texts and reciting memorized poems in public, with expressiveness and confidence”; “Participating, in a responsible and cooperative manner, in performances of dramatic literary texts”; and “Expressing ideas, feelings, and points of view inspired by stories or poems heard or read.”

Shifting attention to “Essential Learning | Articulation with the profile of 1st cycle Basic Education students - Artistic Education – Drama Education/Theater” (DGE, 2018), in the “AE Domain: Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes,” we find the “Organizers” “Appropriation and Reflection,” “Interpretation and Communication,” and “Experimentation and Creation,” common to all four years of schooling, from which we have selected some of their constituent items to be presented in the following table.

Table 2

Essential Learning | Articulation with the profile of 1st cycle Basic Education students - Artistic Education – Drama Education/Theater (DGE, 2018)

Essential Learning Articulation with the profile of 1st cycle Basic Education students - Artistic Education – Drama Education/Theater	
AE Domain: Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes	
Organiser – Appropriation and Reflection	
Recognise the multidisciplinary dimension of theatre, identifying relationships with other arts and areas of knowledge. (p.6)	
Recognise different ways in which an actor uses their voice (pitch, rhythm, intensity) and body (posture, gestures, facial expressions) to characterise characters and settings. (p.6)	
Organiser - Interpretation and Communication	
Distinguish, through experimentation and reflection, dramatic play, improvisation and representation. (p. 7)	
Organiser - Experimentation and creation	
Explore the motor and expressive possibilities of the body in different activities (free or guided movement, character creation, etc.). (p.7)	
Adapt the expressive possibilities of the voice to different contexts and communication situations, paying attention to breathing and aspects of vocal technique (articulation, diction, projection, etc.). (p.7)	

Through the Organizers “Appropriation and Reflection,” “Interpretation and Communication,” and “Experimentation and Creation,” common to all four years of schooling, teachers can enhance synergies between these two curricular units by "Recognizing different

ways an actor uses their voice (pitch, rhythm, intensity) and the body (posture, gestures, facial expressions) to characterize characters and environments”; “Exploring the motor and expressive possibilities of the body in different activities (free or guided movement, character creation, etc.)”; “Adapt the expressive possibilities of the voice to different contexts and communication situations, taking into account breathing and aspects of vocal technique (articulation, diction, projection, etc.)”.

These Organizers reveal new possibilities for teachers to encourage the discovery of poetic language, challenge the imagination, instigate play with words and their meanings, and propose playing with the images that the poem evokes. Implicitly, through the creation of playful situations, children gradually master the rhythms of speech, the duration and intonation of sentences, and the melody or sounds of words, which are largely linked to the physiological aspects of human phonation and develop over the first four years of schooling.

This comparative analysis shows that the items in “Essential Learning | Articulation with the profile of 1st cycle Basic Education students - Artistic Education – Drama Education/Theater” (DGE, 2018) are echoed in similar items in “Essential Learning | Articulation with the profile of Portuguese 1st cycle Basic Education Students- Portuguese” (DGE, 2018), in the “AE Domain: Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes”, with emphasis on “Organizer - Literary Education”. Effects and meanings are amplified, either through the diversification of the expressive exploration of the voice and body, which is all the more differentiated the greater and more diverse the degree of freedom granted by each of the curricular units, or through the importance that corporeality plays in itself in language learning.

In “Essential Learning | Articulation with the profile of students in the 1st cycle of Basic Education - Artistic Education - Dramatic Expression/Theater” (DGE, 2018), it is expected that children will already be able to use their voices relatively well, which also implies relative control of the phonetic process. It will be up to the future teacher to know and highlight from the collection of tongue twisters and nursery rhymes selected from the oral cultural heritage and from the child's own production of rhymes and nursery rhymes, the physical and literary support around which the didactic exploration of poetry can be organized and which leads the child from surprise and discovery of sounds to words and phrases, from sound to meaning, and from there to listening and melodic creation of the poetic text.

Thus, in this synergy between Drama Education and Literary Education, there is a triple role that that future teachers should bear in mind: establishing educational continuity between the first two years of schooling; upholding the importance of children playing and having fun, particularly with their voices and words, throughout the entire first cycle; and giving meaning and sequence to the work between poetry, rhythmic and sound activities, which began in preschool. This approach seeks, in large part, to nurture a bond between children and poetry, long before they even learn to read and write (RAMOS, 2007). In this way, they are not only

outlined as playful, sensory, and emotionally rich entries promising access to the poetic universe in childhood, but they also reaffirm the importance of the place of the body and the body-voice in language learning.

But it is not enough for future teachers to infer and establish curricular synergies if, as Eugénio de Andrade (2000, p. 27) points out, they do not allow themselves to be guided by an “intelligence of the heart”, that is, if they do not find themselves “with themselves and with others, through the hand of poetry” (Cabral, 2002, as cited in Ribeiro, 2007, p. 62).

From the Text

Teachers do not always value the approach to poetic text as a strategy for promoting reading, either because they understand it as something transcendent or because they are unaware of texts that could help them in their practice and that would be significant for the intellectual development of students. This lack of knowledge is often due to their deficient training in relation to the approach to this literary mode.

Poetry requires teachers to undergo in-depth and ongoing training in order to acquire a set of skills; this training, which is primarily aimed at teachers, ultimately benefits students, who are the ultimate beneficiaries of this process and, ultimately, of the dynamic force for learning that poetry represents. (Ribeiro, 2007, p. 69)

As Gebara (2007) points out, it is important to counteract the mistaken way in which poetic texts are sometimes approached in the classroom, being used merely as a strategy for memorisation, recitation or dramatic reading, with their approach reduced to simple decoding, superficial and without true reflection. However, Ribeiro (2007) argues that the creative exploration of poetry involves memorisation, due to the revelations that emerge each time it is repeated, “because the memorised poem stays with us and, each time we repeat it, reveals more of its meaning and the beauty of its language and construction” (Andresen, 1993, p. 185 as cited in Ribeiro, *idem*, p. 72).

Amaral (2002, p. 19) highlights the cathartic effect and inner liberation that poetry can provide to the personal development of those who read it, facilitating the development of linguistic skills, increasing general culture and providing entertainment. Silva (s.d.) refers to the enigmatic factor of poetry and how children try to decipher it, seeking to make sense of the verbal reading and the images they create and imagine while reading or listening to it being read.

The structural principle of the enigma (provoking meaning) triggers the process of evoking the many meanings that can be attributed to the same text (Silva, n.d., p. 10).

The different dimensions of approaching poetic text, articulated in a coherent manner, can thus guide a pedagogical path leading to “a gradual transition from play to reflection, from the

enjoyment of elementary reading to analysis and criticism, from the limited nature of language to a progressive and fluent mastery of language and its structure” (Cabral, 2002 as cited in Ribeiro, 1997, p. 264).

Naturally, the approach to a poem should always be tailored to the age group and profile of its audience. The theme and aesthetics of the poem, such as its sounds, symbolic images and rich figurative language, are dimensions that must be in line with the child's stage of development and their own interests and experiences, so that the poem can be explored and dramatised, or, if desired, converted into a source of new experiences, becoming an inducer for the creation of a new text. The exploration of any type of text, with a view to its dramatisation, means using the students' capacity for play for didactic purposes. Language itself can become another game, a source of pleasure, thus stimulating understanding, expression and creation.

The ideas and/or images that the text evokes can be expressed by students through words, gestures, and movements that allow them to grasp and experience its meaning through the experiences that the process itself triggers. Initial improvisations can lead to an intuitive approach and analysis that simultaneously stimulate students' cognitive, affective, and communicative skills. Thus, it will not only be an intellectual experience, but also the experience of sensory and aesthetically rich situations capable of involving them in solving problems that arise from the different contexts of appropriation of the text. In this sense, the theatrical approach can enhance the exploration of the poetic text, mobilizing and stimulating the subject's imaginative and interpretive abilities.

Drama Education in the Appropriation of Poetic Text

The research under development – “The Poetic Text at the confluence of Drama Education and Literary Education” – methodologically, it is qualitative in nature supported by action research. It was based at the initial training of teachers and educators at the Institute of Education of the University of Minho, covering the full cycle (three years) of the Bachelor's Degree in Basic Education. In this second phase, the research prioritized poetic text, developing the intervention with the two 2nd-year classes throughout the 2nd semester, gradually occupying the 2 hours of each of the 15 classes that make up the Drama Education course unit.

In accordance with established interdisciplinary principles, the collection and selection criteria for the works, as well as the exploration of the conceptual and imagery aspects of poetry, namely *logopeia* and *fanopeia*, were handled by the Literary Education teacher, and Drama Education took over the *melopeia*, i.e., working with sounds (rhythm, cadence, melody), as well as deepening the ways of saying and interpreting.

The selection of works focused on the children's and young adult literature of João Pedro Mésseder, a prolific and renowned author (also) of "writing for children," of whom Pimenta (1999, as cited in Recchou, 2015, p. 19-20) says: "You have to like words and know them to dare to play with them. Understanding their sound, rhythm, and multiple meanings and incorporating them into a game is João Pedro Mésseder's successful exercise.

Throughout the intervention, teachers from both courses maintained systematic dialogues, ensuring interdisciplinary links, assuming the position of observer-participants, and in the case of Drama Education, teacher in role. This position was determined by the importance that literary mediation, a taste for poetry, the pleasure of reciting it, and the teacher's performative skills can have as an example in the students' performance.

From the Body

Our experiences determine how we express ourselves and communicate. The evolution of knowledge of one's own body is determined by the quality of these experiences. To a large extent, it is "the inscription that moves, and each gesture learned and internalized reveals excerpts from the history of the society to which it belongs" (Soares, 2006, p. 109 as cited in Silva and Bottentuit Junior, 2016, p. 7).

Through gestures and movement, as a form of natural communication, we express emotions, feelings, ideas, and perceptions of the world. The "meanings of gestures can enable a historical narrative of the body" (Vaz, 2006, p. 58). As Molcho (2007) points out, our body language is the result of absorbing our sensory world.

In the performance that occurs in the sharing of "saying", emotions are manifested through body language and gestures. The work of the *diseur*/performer ultimately aims at transformation. And under the guise of formalising gestures and words, inner spontaneity is hidden, which is related to the creative function. The body cannot be considered separately from the performer, as it is not a shell that covers emotions, sensations and thoughts, but the materialisation of their inner invisibility.

Through the exploration of a set of theatrical tools, where the body, voice, space and play are present, one experiments and plays with one's own and others' creativity, observing and sharing creation with others. When the body, worked, experimented with and transformed, is dominated by the force emanating from words, it itself becomes a poem. As Zumthor argues:

It is through the body that we are time and place: the voice proclaims it as an emanation of our being. Writing also involves measures of time and space, it is true, but its ultimate goal is to free itself from them. The voice beneficially accepts its servitude. From this primordial yes, everything is coloured in language, nothing in it is

neutral anymore, words flow, laden with intention, with smells, they smell of man and earth (or that with which man represents them) (Zumthor, 1997, p. 157).

From the Voice

In the context of the intervention in Drama Education and when presenting the topic to the students, we detected that, in their own way, each one was trying to escape poetry. From the silence and the tense signals emanating from their bodies, we recognised signs of strangeness. Silent voices hushed fears, while bodies, in their postural signals and uncontrolled laughter, spoke of apprehensions. What apprehensions? Apprehensions about words or simply about saying them? Or about hearing them said? Or about hearing themselves say them? Or even about what they might feel when they said them?

In their expressions, the group's body language conveyed all the unease that the literature review had revealed to us about the distancing of humans from poetry: each person's refusal to listen to themselves speak; the inability to recognise one's own voice as a unique acoustic identity; intolerant impatience when listening to the voice of others; generalised dullness of the senses; the inability, as Schaffer (1991) points out, to quench the "thirst for noise" and "refocus the ear"; the denial of emotional involvement with the poem; the difficulty of going beyond the chronological and dizzying time of contemporary life and "stopping" to experience the *kairological* time to which poetry invites us.

Anticipating choices, we sought to create striking atmospheres for the group's encounter with the poem. Like Gebara (2002, p. 30), we believe that the distance between reader and text "can be mitigated or overcome by the way the material is presented, by the stimulus given for engagement with the text in the text itself, and also by a certainty (...) that interaction is possible, enjoyable and enriching".

In this sense, we immersed ourselves in the author's works and highlighted a set of poems that, due to the richness of their sounds and the imagery of their words, could resonate with the trainees.

For the pre-reading phase, we reinvented the classroom space by denaturalising it. Evoking Brook, we turned the empty space into a stage for the poem – "a place where the invisible can appear" (Brook, 2013: 23).

Words cut out from Mésseder's poems, later enlarged and scattered on the floor, invited the trainee to move, choose and play with sounds. The spoken, whispered, individually or chorally sung forms were later joined by contemporary variations reminiscent of faint *jazz* statements or urban rhythms close to *rap*. It is the prerogative of every discovery to be experienced. Varley (2011, p. 23), on the subject of the "discovery of speech", maintains: "I believe that a thousand ways of breathing and singing exist and that each person has to recognize her own".

Here too, the trainees had the opportunity to experience sounds, to choose from the universe of unspoken words, the chosen word, returning it afterwards to its place of origin - the poem. In this strategy, we encouraged the trainees to read. Initially, this was silent reading without the influence of models, which later gave way to solitary reading aloud. With this, we sought to reflect with the trainees on the cognitive, affective and expressive aspects, leading them to experience sensibilities and recognise that 'poetic form can shape the human person in their entirety' (Antunes, Dias, Silva & 2017, p. 170).

Contemplating various ways of expanding the poetic repertoire and celebrating poetry, contributing to the creation and consolidation of atmospheres conducive to it, is an intention that remains present on the project's horizon. Involving the trainees in this purpose would bring together the efforts developed and the results achieved by them during what we call the spiral of theatrical work around the body, voice and text. Coming together to hold a symposium on the work of João Pedro Mésseder, it was important to us, on the one hand, that the trainees become aware of how each of them related to the poetic text and, on the other, that each of them gave back to the author the unique appropriation they made of his work.

From the available poetic repertoire, we chose three works: "Versos quase matemáticos" (Almost Mathematical Verses) (2008), "Porto Porto" (Oporto Oporto) (2009) and "Pequeno Livro das Coisas" (Little Book of Things) (2012). From the first work, we selected four poems: "Números" (Numbers), "5 Moços e 6 Meninas" (5 Boys and 6 Girls), "Dez meninos" (Ten Boys) and "Adições" (Additions). From reading them, we retained the humour, the pleasure derived from the renewed use of traditional oral formulas and the frenzy of the game played between numbers and arithmetic operations. It is, one might say, an open invitation to rhythmic variations and the discovery of cadences that the trainees were able to glimpse and perform both individually and collectively.

"Porto Porto", characterised, according to Rechou (2015, p. 27) "by the use of imagery linked to a physical geospace (Porto)", evokes in him the daily life of the big city, its mundanities, the ways of life of its people: those from there, those from outside, those passing through, landscapes inhabited by memories, allowing an almost snapshot of characters revealed in poems such as: "Douro", "Conversa", "Canção conversada".

From the poetry collection "Pequeno Livro das Coisas" (Little Book of Things), we have selected "O Livro" (The Book) and "O Promontório" (The Promontory), poems that appeal to thoughts, to things-causes that speak of themselves and others. "O Livro", a thing-object with a voice inside, speaks of the world and its reading, becoming a voice pregnant with hope for another universe that it itself contains.

And, at the moment when the voice, now more unveiled, became gesture and reading became body, to use a Barthesian reference, the desire of the "staged" poem gained materiality.

Final Considerations

Recognising the importance of poetry in the educational context, we sought to understand how this literary form translates into the framework of the first cycle of Basic Education, seeking links between the programmatic guidelines for Drama Education and those for Literary Education.

Based on this analysis, we identified a set of statements that could guide teachers in their didactic approach to poetic texts. Thus, supported by the project “The Poetic Text at the confluence of Drama Education and Literary Education” and highlighting the transversality of the Portuguese language, we sought reading strategies that allowed for the development of phonological and interpretative dimensions inherent to the contexts of poetic text, contributing to the improvement of linguistic skills, the ability to deconstruct text, the development of imaginative capacity, the production of knowledge, and the enrichment of culture.

In the opinion of the trainers, the interdisciplinary perspective that the research took not only complemented the teaching activities in each of the curricular units but also, by enhancing the deepening of conceptual knowledge about poetic text, facilitated, through interpretative dynamics, the students' approach to poetry.

The systematic reflections at the end of each session and the group interview conducted with the students during the evaluation phase confirmed the importance of the intervention in terms of: internalising knowledge about poetic texts, mastering theatrical tools and practices that aided the work of interpretation, as well as the systematisation of different teaching methods developed in approaching poetic texts with a view to future teaching professionalism.

It is hoped that the fading of the strangeness with which the trainee viewed poetry, the broadening and deepening of their knowledge of children's and young people's literature, and the deepening of their understanding of forms of expression and interpretation have instilled a pleasure in the didactic approach to poetic text, in a continuous and systematic manner. As trainers, we find echoes in the words of Pennac (1993, p. 11): *The verb “to read” does not support the imperative. It is an aversion it shares with others: the verb “to love” ... the verb “to dream” ...*

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International Intelligibility of Nigerian English: The Role of Consonant Clusters Simplification

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Abstract

The study examines the phonological intelligibility of Nigerian speakers of English. Specifically, it investigates the extent to which consonants in the speech of Nigerian Speakers of English affect their intelligibility to speakers from different contexts. 100 evaluators (international listeners made up of non-Nigerian speakers) transcribed six speech samples from six audio podcasts in which Nigerian speakers delivered speeches. The transcription of the different speech samples served to assess intelligibility at the pronunciation level. Results revealed that out of six tokens of intelligibility breakdown caused by simplifying consonant clusters, only one involved a word-initial cluster with /h/, while the remaining five arose from final cluster simplification. These final simplifications, such as [mɒ bi:], [ni:s], [mis], and [ski:d], led to intelligibility problems by producing new words, non-words, or approximations that did not fit the context.

Keywords

Consonant; English as a Lingua Franca; Intelligibility; Nigerian English; Pronunciation Teaching

Introduction

Traditionally, English language pronunciation teaching was typically based on native-speaker norms, usually Received Pronunciation for British English and General American (GA). In other words, people studied English with the intention of interacting with native speakers,

and attaining this “native-like” accent was the ultimate goal. However, in the light of the expansion of English as a global language, such assumptions are in urgent need of reconsideration and reevaluation, especially as the situation nowadays is shifting to a scenario where English language is increasingly being used for communication worldwide between speakers of other languages. A growing body of research shows that there are now more linguistic exchanges between non- native speakers (NNS-NNS) of English than between non-native speakers and native speakers (NNS-NS) (Mc Arthur 2002; Crystal 2003; 2012a; Kirkpatrick 2006; 2007; 2012; 2014). English is spoken all over the world, and it has become a lingua franca, a real international language, and, as a result, intelligibility and successful communication are more important goals for learners than native-like accuracy. It is against this background that this study seeks to assess the pronunciation intelligibility of Nigerian speakers of English to different speakers of English interacting in international settings.

The study examines the phonological intelligibility of Nigerian speakers of English. Specifically, it investigates the extent to which consonant cluster simplification in the speech of Nigerian Speakers of English affects their intelligibility to speakers from different contexts.

Methodology

Materials and Methods

Six speech samples drawn from six audio podcasts featuring five Nigerian Yoruba speakers were employed to assess intelligibility. These speakers were not selected to represent all Yoruba speakers but rather to reflect an elite subgroup with wide national and international audiences, for whom intelligibility is particularly critical. Their Yoruba background was equally important, given that Yoruba is one of Nigeria’s three national languages and is spoken by a major ethnic group.

The podcasts were transcribed by 100 international listeners representing 25 nationalities. To ensure the reliability of the data, strict selection criteria were applied. All participants were required to be advanced English users, with a minimum IELTS score of 7.0 in listening, speaking, and writing, as previous studies suggest that low-proficiency listeners may struggle with intelligibility tasks (Eisenstein & Berkowitz, 1981; Matsuura et al., 1999). In addition, those with prolonged exposure to Nigerian English were excluded since familiarity with a speaker’s accent can influence intelligibility (Gass & Varonis, 1984). Before the task, listeners were informed of the speakers’ names, professions, and podcast contexts in order to provide focus (Atechi 2004), as listening rarely occurs in isolation (Tiffen 1974; Osle 2013), although the actual content was withheld. Each excerpt was played once only, as repetition would have created an unnatural listening situation, and listeners were asked to transcribe what they heard, marking unclear sections with a dash, bracket, or guess. These written transcriptions

served as verifiable records for subsequent analysis (Tiffen 1974; Atechi 2004; Kashiwagi & Snyder 2010).

Once completed, the transcriptions were manually entered and re-checked for accuracy, allowing the researcher to engage closely with the data and avoid the distancing effect associated with computer-assisted techniques (Cohen et al. 2011; Flick 2009). The analysis revealed six tokens of intelligibility breakdown caused by consonant clusters, each involving 20 or more listeners who failed to understand the utterance or word. Errors from fewer listeners were excluded, with the cut-off point aligning with benchmarks used in previous studies (Tiffen 1974; Atechi 2004). Before the results are presented, the paper outlines the terms and codes used in data presentation.

Conventions and Terms Used in Presenting the Data

Tokens

A Token represents a word that caused an intelligibility breakdown for listeners. For example, consider Extract 2.1

Extract 2.1

Context: Yes, the character Jennifer its crazy. / I channel everything into it/ to get the character/ and to still be me. /Just be yourself, be original. / don't let power, money, fame get into your head. /Just be you. /Whoever you are, keep your head straight. /**humility** [ju:'mɪləti] really matters, you have to be humble (Speaker one, unit 17-25).

In this extract, speaker one simplified the initial consonant cluster in “humility” by not using the glottal fricative /h/. *Humility* (pronounced as [ju:'mɪləti]) was problematic to 43 listeners. The word “humility” here is a single token. It should also be noted that if a word occurs more than once and causes an intelligibility breakdown, this will be classified as separate tokens, as indicated in the following extract from the podcast recordings.

Extract 2.2 (Tokens 5 and 6)

Context: ...knowledge, education, **skilled** [ski:d] engineers/**skilled** [ski:d] teachers to produce those engineers/and to develop the human/that will deliver all of the services/that will make life sustainable and living for our people/are some of the challenges that we are dealing with (Speaker five, unit 23-28).

Description of Codes used in tabulating the data in this study

As the data were tabulated (see results throughout for deployment), the following codes were used.

NOL= This code refers to the number of listeners who experienced intelligibility breakdown.

ORP= (Orthographic Representation of Phoneme). This indicates instances in the data where listeners appeared to represent the sound they heard using orthography. For example, in Token 3, the final consonant cluster in *midst* is simplified to [s], resulting in the pronunciation [mis] in the phrase "...I'm in the midst of some people" (Speaker Four, Unit 9–12). This simplification caused an intelligibility problem for 31 listeners, who transcribed the word as "mis," "mix," or "mist." The listeners' transcriptions, therefore, demonstrate orthographic representation of the perceived sound.

ORA= (Orthographic Representation Attempted). This code refers to instances in the data where listeners appeared to have orthographically represented part of a word apart from the syllable in which the pronunciation of a segmental feature varied from the referent accent (RP).

SA = (Semantically Appropriate). This refers to instances where listeners seemed to have chosen words that make sense in their interpretation of utterances. For example: three listeners transcribed "...humility [ju:'mɪləti] really matters, you have to be humble" as "family really matters; you have to be humble". This listeners' text or transcription shows that they have chosen words that are meaningful within the utterance, but are not contextually appropriate as it does not fit the context in which the utterance was made.

CA= (Contextually Appropriate). This signals instances where listeners seemed to have relied on the context or circumstances in which the utterances were produced or cases where they may have resorted to their own previous background knowledge in their interpretation of utterances. For example: Eight listeners transcribed "must be" (pronounced as [mʊ bi:] by speaker three) as "are" in the phrase "...we need that our laws and rules must be respected".

SC= (Syntactically Correct). This code refers to cases where listeners seemed to have chosen words that are syntactically correct or appropriate. In other words, they have used their syntactic knowledge to decode the meaning of a word.

NR= (No response). This code refers to instances where listeners did not write anything for the word said by the speaker.

Results

The table provided below presents an overview of each of the consonants that were identified, alongside the number of instances of intelligibility breakdown associated with each.

Table 3.1
Consonants causing intelligibility breakdown.

Phonological Factor	Tokens	Instances of intelligibility breakdown to ILs
Consonant cluster simplification		
initial cluster	1 (humility)	43
final cluster	2 (must be)	48
	3 (midst)	31
	4 (needs)	29
	5 (skilled)	46
	6 (skilled)	38

Consonant Clusters Simplification

In this study, a consonant cluster is taken to represent a group of consonants that occur within one syllable. This might occur at the beginning of individual words (e.g. “cluster” [ˈklʌs tər]), or at the end of words (e.g. consonants). English allows up to three consonant sounds in any position in a word and might have as many as four consonant phonemes (Roach, 2009b). Not all languages have such complicated syllable structure with many languages requiring a strict CV structure. The method used by Nigerian speakers to simplify ‘problematic’ syllables (with consonant cluster), is “deletion” and there are claims that this is a threat to intelligibility (Jenkins 2000).

In this study, there were six tokens of intelligibility breakdown that resulted from simplifying consonant clusters. These six tokens are shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2
Intelligibility breakdown involving consonant clusters

Token no	Speaker	Word	Pronunciation	Instances of Breakdown
1	One	Humility	[ju:ˈmɪləti]	43
2	Three	must be	[mʊ bi:]	48
3	Four	Midst	[mɪs]	31
4	Five	Needs	[ni:s]	29
5	Five	Skilled	[ski:d]	46
6	Five	Skilled	[ski:d]	38

This chapter will begin by discussing Tokens 1 and 3 because they are considered to be straightforward cases. Thereafter, it will deal with tokens where there appears to have been a build-up of factors that caused the intelligibility breakdown. In Token 1, speaker one simplified the initial consonant cluster in “humility” by not using the glottal fricative /h/. *Humility* (pronounced as [ju:ˈmɪləti]) was problematic to 43 listeners. Here is the context and their interpretations:

Extract 2.3

Context: Yes, the character Jennifer its crazy. / I channel everything into it/ to get the character/ and to still be me. /Just be yourself, be original. / don't let power, money, fame get into your head. /Just be you. /Whoever you are, keep your head straight. /**humility** [ju:'mɪləti] really matters, you have to be humble (Speaker one, unit 17-25).

	Listener response	NOL	ORP	ORA	SA	CA	SC	NR
1	You really matter; you have to be humble	14 listeners	✓					
2	????? really matters; you have to be humble	19 listeners						✓
3	Unity really matters; you have to be humble	6 listeners	✓					
4	Nothing really matters; you have to be humble	1 listener			✓	✓	✓	
5	Family really matters; you have to be humble	1 listener			✓		✓	
6	The thing really matters; you have to be humble	2 listeners			✓		✓	

As shown above, the utterance in which the word *humility* appears provides sufficient contextual clue to the word. In other words, the context in which the word occurs is enough to aid the comprehension of the message for the listeners in this instance. Yet, the word still caused intelligibility breakdown for 43 listeners. Of the 43 listeners, 19 did not put anything down for *humility* as they did not understand the pronunciation of the word. Fourteen listeners (3 Americans, 2 Greeks, 6 British, 1 Spanish, 1 Italian, and 1 Indian) understood “humility” as “you” [ju:] while six British listeners perceived the word as “unity” [ˈju:nəti]. Both responses suggest that the non-realisation of /h/ caused problems for these listeners. This is because the syllable in *you* and the first syllable in *unity* are [ju:]. In (4) of the transcriptions, a British listener interpreted the word *humility* as “nothing”, which does not give any pronunciation clues at all. It is quite possible that this listener has used semantic cues to work out what he heard. A response such as “nothing” is common in the frame “really matters”. Therefore, the listener may have chosen this word to fit the context. In (5), an Austrian listener interpreted the word as “family”, and in (6), two listeners (Italian and Indian) interpreted the word as “only thing”. These responses suggest that the listeners have not understood the word pronounced by the speaker and may have resorted to guessing based on the background context.

In token 8, Speaker four, in describing how she gets inspiration when writing a play script, said the word *midst* [mɪdst] as [mɪs] in the extract below:

Extract:2.4

Context: ... I am most of the time by myself/and when I sit down at times/some things just cross my mind/, and I start to write/ or I'm in the **midst** [mis] of some people/and I see things... (Speaker four, unit 9-12)

It can be seen that the final consonant cluster in “midst” is simplified to [s]. The simplification of the final cluster in “midst” created a word “miss” that did not fit the context of the word. This pronunciation caused intelligibility problems for 31 listeners who responded as follows:

	Listener response	NOL	ORP	ORA	SA	CA	SC	NR
1	or I'm in the????? of some people	4 listeners						✓
2	or I'm in the <i>mix</i> of some people	1 listener	✓					
3	or I'm in the <i>miss</i> of some people	24 listeners	✓					
4	or I'm in the <i>mist</i> of some people	2 listeners	✓					

Four listeners (1 Norwegian, 1 Romanian, 1 Thai, 1 Austrian) were unable to provide any written clues as they did not write anything for the word “midst”. In example (2), a Nepalese heard *midst* as “mix”, indicating that the [d] and the [t] were not used. Two listeners (Palestinian, Italian) understood the word as “mist”, suggesting the cluster simplification is causing the issue. 24 listeners (5 Spanish, 2 Italians, 2 Greeks, 1 Iranian, 1 Brazilian, 3 Germans, 2 Russians, 2 Norwegians, 1 Indian, 1 Austrian, 2 Chinese, 1 Saudi Arabian, 1 Polish) wrote [mis]. This response shows that they disregarded contextual cues and literally transcribed what they heard, even though it made no sense to say *in the miss of people*. The conflict between the acoustic signals they heard and the context in which the word occurred probably made the processing of the word in question challenging for the listeners.

However, 69 listeners (37 British, 2 German, 5 Americans, 2 French, 4 Ghanaians, 3 Malawians, 6 Indians, 4 Norwegians, 1 Korean, 1 South African, 1 Spanish, 1 Singaporean) treated this as a cluster simplification and transcribed the speaker's target word *midst*. The consonant cluster reduction made no difference to the 69 listeners. It is worth noting that the elision of [d] and [t] in *midst* did not affect intelligibility among the British and American listeners. This could be because many native speakers also omit the [t] in such environments.

Thus far in this section, this paper has discussed two clear cases where consonant cluster simplification was the only cause of the intelligibility breakdown. It will now move to consider complex cases (2, 4, 5 and 6). In token 2, speaker three is discussing Chinese trade and

investment in Nigeria. In order to establish this business agreement, speaker three said *we need that our laws and rules “must be” respected*, where the consonant cluster in “*must be*” is simplified to [b], though in addition the vowel quality [ɔ] is used. This pronunciation of “must be” as [mɔ bi:] caused intelligibility problems for 48 listeners who responded as follows:

	Listeners’ responses	NOL	ORP	ORA	SA	CA	SC	NR
1	We need that our laws and rules <i>are</i> respected	8 listeners			✓	✓	✓	
2	We need that our laws and rules???? be respected	21 listeners						✓
3	We need that our laws and rules <i>will</i> be respected	5 listeners			✓	✓	✓	
4	We need that our laws and rules <i>may</i> be respected	1 listener			✓		✓	
5	We need that our laws and rules <i>should</i> be respected	3 listeners			✓	✓	✓	
6	We need that our laws and rules <i>more</i> be respected	3 listeners	✓					
7	We need that our laws and rules <i>more</i> be respected	7 listeners	✓					

From the responses, the fact that the majority of listeners who failed to understand the phrase “must be”, recognised “be” may suggest that the problem lies in the pronunciation of the word “must”. It could be that the listeners did not understand the pronunciation of “must” and hence they have used semantic cues or information available in the sentence to work out what they heard. This may explain the reason why some listeners have filled the blank space with an auxiliary verb (See examples 1, 3, 4 and 5 in the table above).

A critical look at a response such as “more” (see example 6) demonstrates that listeners did not recognise the consonant clusters, but they orthographically represented the vowel quality [ɔ] used by the speaker. These findings show that the issue here is the vowel quality (this has been discussed in section 6.1.3), but the consonant cluster in the coda of the word “must” could be a contributory factor, nevertheless.

In token 4, speaker five pronounced needs [ni:dz] as [ni:s] in the phrase “the compelling needs to create jobs”. The pronunciation shows the non-realisation of voiced alveolar plosive [d] and devoicing of the final consonant [z]. This pronunciation caused problems for 29 listeners who failed to respond, as they did not write anything for the word. Since the listeners did not provide any response for the word, it is hard to know which of these features of pronunciation contribute most to the misunderstanding: the non-realisation of the voiced alveolar plosive [d], or the devoicing of the final consonant [z]. It is assumed that both features of pronunciation caused the intelligibility failure because either [ni:z] (with non-use of /d/) or [ni:ds] (with devoiced /z/) would have been understood. In

reality, it is normal in all varieties of English for final [z] to be devoiced (Docherty 1992:35) and for [d] or [t] to be elided in final clusters (Jenkins 2002). So, it may be when the two features are combined that there is an intelligibility breakdown.

Finally, in Tokens 5 and 6, speaker five pronounced “skilled” as [ski:d], which caused loss of intelligibility for 46 and 38 listeners, respectively. The issue seems to be that the final cluster [ld] is simplified via the non-use of [l], which is why “skilled” is heard as “skied”, “ski” and “key” though another major problem is the length and the quality of the vowel.

In conclusion, it can be seen from the results that out of the six tokens of intelligibility breakdown caused by simplifying consonant clusters, only one token was due to simplifying word-initial consonant cluster, and it involved /h/. The remaining five tokens were due to simplifying final consonant cluster. The simplifications include the following words/phrases, i.e. “must be” pronounced as [mɒ bi:], “needs” as [ni:s], “midst” as [mis] and “skilled pronounced as [ski:d] on two occasions. The five tokens of final cluster simplification caused intelligibility problems as the simplifications created new words that did not fit the context (e.g. [mis], [ni:s] and [ski:d]), and non-words or approximations of the words and phrases (e.g. [mɒ bi:]).

Some scholars (e.g. Jenkins 2002a) argue that final consonant cluster simplifications are permissible (as long as the simplifications follow English L1 rules) as final clusters are quite difficult to articulate smoothly except in slow, careful speech. Although the word-final consonant clusters in [mis], [ski:d], and [nis] were simplified according to Nigerian English rules, these pronunciations still caused intelligibility problems. The final cluster simplification in “must be” [mɒ bi:] did not follow permissible final cluster simplification rules of L1 English and Nigerian English simplification rules (See Simo Bobda 2007 for segmental rules of Nigerian English phonology). However, there were six instances where cluster simplification did not lead to any intelligibility failure. All the examples involve the final plosive [t]. These include “must” realised as [mʌs] by speaker two in “you must not give offence here”; “first” as [ˈfɜ:s] in “em em I think the point to make first is that...”; and “don’t let” as [do:n let].

Summary of Results

As discussed above, the findings indicate that consonant cluster simplifications caused problems except in cases where the elision follows the rule of L1 simplification. Six tokens of intelligibility breakdown resulted from simplifying consonant clusters. Out of the six tokens, one token was due to simplifying word-initial consonant cluster; the remaining five were due to simplifying a final consonant cluster.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of the study have significant pedagogical implications for the teaching of English pronunciation in Nigerian schools. Specifically, it helps raise awareness among teachers of the critical problems hindering intelligible pronunciation by Nigerian speakers of English, which will be the primary focus in teaching and learning. Looking at the results of this study, it is clear that some features of the pronunciation of English by speakers from Nigeria are more important and critical for international intelligibility. Specifically, consonant clusters are features of pronunciation that English teachers in Nigeria should work on in their teaching.

Limitations and suggestions for future research.

This study relied on speech samples from broadcast materials (audio podcast) that were later played to participants for evaluation (in the form of a transcription exercise) in terms of the intelligibility of the speech samples. In this way, the approach used may be said to be limited by the fact that it conceptualises intelligibility as a one-dimensional construct. While research methodology using this approach provides insights into intelligibility of ELF communication, it does not fully represent the “interactional construct (the interactive nature of talk) constantly negotiated between speakers and listeners” (Smith 1992:76). Notwithstanding, by using this approach, this study offers some insights about the processes of cross-cultural communication that may have been difficult to achieve with other approaches. For instance, while face-to-face communication or interaction, which is more multi-dimensional in nature, may have reflected the interactional process between speakers and listeners, this may not have given so many instances of intelligibility breakdown.

This is because, in interactions where a listener encounters a problem in understanding the speaker’s utterance, he/she might let the unrecognised utterance “pass”, on the assumption that it will become either clear or redundant as talk progresses. This may also be to avoid coming across as rude. In this line of reasoning, Firth (1996:244) adds that it is not clear if these problems are genuinely missed by the hearer or whether they were heard and allowed to pass. The effect of a “let it pass” strategy can lead to the speakers ignoring the problematic utterance/word altogether and abandoning the topic or point being discussed, given the dynamic nature of speech. For example, Mauranen (2006) only found six obvious instances of misunderstanding in her five hours of data from Finnish universities.

In contrast, the methodology used in the present study offers two crucial advantages: first, it enabled the researcher to investigate more precisely mismatches between the speakers’ recordings and what the listeners heard. That is, it made it possible to identify all the words or phrases the listeners had not understood. Second, it presents more permanent and easily verifiable records for further study and analysis (Tiffen 1974; Atechi 2004; Munro et al. 2006; Deterding 2013). A future study could test the findings by using different research methods.

Second, the present study focused on the intelligibility of English spoken by educated Nigerian speakers, with a special focus on 100 international listeners. Thus, the findings of this research might not be applicable to all Nigerian English speakers and to non-Nigerian speakers at different proficiency levels. Future studies may generate new insights and extend current knowledge by replicating this study with different groups of speakers and listeners.

Conclusion

The current research has indicated a rich and fascinating vein of work required to contribute to current knowledge and understanding of English intelligibility in the Nigerian context. Specifically, the research has added greatly to the understanding of the segmental features (particularly consonant clusters) of pronunciation that hamper the intelligibility of Nigerian speakers when they communicate in international contexts. As discussed, this understanding forms a useful foundation for reconsidering how English pronunciation is taught in Nigerian schools.

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Thematic Axis III
**Gender, Identity,
and Cultural
Dimensions in
Education**

Traversing along the Living Roots: Native Performance Culture (NpC) as an Indigenous Performance Methodology for Transformative Learning, Research and Creativity

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Abstract

This chapter explores the profound implications of embedding Indigenous land-based and holistic methodologies within artistic teaching and learning. It examines Native Performance Culture (NpC), an Indigenous performance methodology developed by Cree artist-scholar and ceremonialist Floyd Favel. Positioned as a decolonial alternative to the colonial legacy of theatre on Turtle Island, NpC is presented as a framework for transformative learning, research, and creativity. Developed through a collaboration between Floyd Favel and Sabina Sweta Sen-Podstawska, a Bengali-Polish Odissi performer and scholar, the methodology is theorized as a holistic, intergenerational, and relational pedagogy. Its core principles are grounded in land and community-based experiences, ceremony, and the honoring of ancestral knowledge and all relations—the "living roots." The authors advocate for developing an Indigenous performance methodology as an artistic genre accessible and open to all, fostering Indigenous epistemologies and transcultural creative engagement. The analysis traces Favel's artistic dialogue between his European theatre training and his Indigenous cultural upbringing that shaped NpC. It focuses on NpC's current evolution from adaptations of European classics to the centering of Indigenous stories. Furthermore, it investigates the methodology's application within higher education, advocating for the respectful inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in academia. NpC offers a tangible pathway for the decolonization and indigenization of artistic pedagogies that bridge creative practice and

academic inquiry and cultivate transformative learning experiences, contribute to the empowerment of communities, equitable societal shifts, and offer vital pathways towards sustainable growth and creative futures.

Keywords

Artistic pedagogy; decolonization; Indigenous performance; Native Performance Culture (NpC)

I had always imagined that through the roots of the trees we were connected to the whole world, that the forest covered the whole world and held it in place. If it were not for the roots that held the earth together, we would all start falling into the darkness of the universe

(Favel F, *Sweet Cherry Wine*, 2025)

Context

Theatre on Turtle Island (North America) is a colonial art form, not Indigenous to our lands. I was trained in theatre in Europe, and I grew up within my Indigenous culture here on this island; therefore, my ongoing artistic dialogue is with the colonial theatre discourse, says Floyd Favel. This has also shaped our research and collaboration between us, Floyd Favel and Sabina Sweta Sen-Podstawska, which we have been conducting since 2018. This chapter speaks about Indigenous pedagogical conditioning that embraces holistic, intergenerational, experiential, and relational approaches. We trace Favel's personal educational journey that led to the formation of an Indigenous performance methodology – Native Performance Culture (NpC) and its further dissemination. Looking into the learning and research process for the artists-scholars in developing the methodology, it highlights a form of pedagogy grounded in the land and community-based experiences, ceremony, observation, and honoring of ancestors, Elders, and teachers – all our relations - our living roots. It considers how NpC's application in the creative process is currently evolving from the adaptations of European classics to sharing Indigenous stories. This essay also discusses the method's extension into the university, as a base for learning storytelling and performance, as well as honoring Indigenous knowledge and methodologies and their respectful inclusion in the academic learning and research process. We discuss the application of the NpC methodology in the creative research process, as well as in learning and research contexts of higher education, as pathways of decolonization and indigenization in artistic pedagogies.

Decolonizing and Indigenizing through Native Performance Culture

Both these concepts are tied together as “If we think about decolonization as the un-doing or unsettling of colonial power and structures and ways of learning and teaching, then Indigenization can be seen as the re-doing or reaffirming of education to include Indigenous ways of knowing, thinking, feeling and being” (Queen's University, n.d.). Crucially, these processes are Indigenous, necessitating the active involvement of the people and land, and maintaining relevance to them. Tuck and Yang contend that ‘Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor’, that such metaphorical uses dilute the term's true meaning, which is fundamentally about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life. They assert that decolonization is a material process, not a symbolic one, and that it requires concrete actions of land return and Indigenous sovereignty (2012, p. 1).

Reflecting this definition, Favel's work is a living embodiment of decolonization. His holistic work, bridging history, art, ceremony, nature, family, and traditional protocols, springs from his own life experience, the land and community, which continuously face the colonial repercussions. Addictions, suicide, violence, ignorance, jealousy, disinterest in cultural and spiritual ways, and misuse of treaty money and land are day-to-day issues at Poundmaker Reserve. Yet, holding on to the ways of his ancestors, who were amongst the last hereditary chiefs, Sundance makers and medicine people of his community, he is upholding and bringing a revival to his land and community, inviting all generations and people to walk along this path. In this context, Favel's work naturally engages in indigenization, understood as:

the process through which Indigenous peoples reclaim and celebrate their cultural identities, often in response to historical marginalization and cultural suppression imposed by colonial forces. This effort seeks to integrate Indigenous perspectives, traditions, and histories into broader societal frameworks, including education and government, fostering a more inclusive environment (Biscontini, 2022, n.p.).

The NpC methodology is integral to this indigenizing practice, engaging in dialogues with Western traditions and collaborating with Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists, scholars and students. This approach simultaneously uplifts Indigenous ways, voices and knowledges, while maintaining inclusivity and extending its methods to all people, communities, lands and institutions. These key concepts posit the NpC methodology as a transformative creative pedagogy, a claim to which the subsequent sections bear testimony.

The Educational Journey to Native Performance Culture

In his early years upon his return from Europe, Floyd Favel began his lifetime research project to develop an Indigenous methodology for Indigenous performance – Native Performance

Culture (NpC), as he observed that in practice, Indigenous theatre in Canada was no different from colonial Canadian theatre; the difference was in theme and content, but not in methods. NpC was tasked with developing a performance method derived from Indigenous performance principles embedded in ritual and social structures (Favel, 2009, p. 35). Favel refers to a private correspondence with one of his teachers, the Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski: upon leaving Italy, Grotowski sent me a letter advising, as one of his last teachings, to work with my mother culture and language. So, Favel immersed himself in his people's ways, becoming one of the few traditionalists of his community in Poundmaker Cree Nation, Saskatchewan, Canada. While scholars have referred to Favel as "The Plains Cree Grotowski" (Forsythe, 2002, p. 9), he notes, though, that I don't work under the name of Grotowski; I have found my own way. Favel was not in touch with Grotowski until years later, and a few months before Grotowski's death, Favel sent a fax with a message about his current show, and in Grotowski's response, it cryptically said only "Glory to the Victorious Warrior." To this day, Favel honors Grotowski as one of his teachers and offers him food and prayers at his ceremonies.

During his travels to the mountains of Japan, Favel met director Tadashi Suzuki, who had developed a performance method rooted in Japanese principles. Inspired by Suzuki's approach and his adaptations of Greek and Russian classics, Favel conceived of creating an Indigenous performance method based on Cree ritual and social structures. Lacking North American precedents, Favel, following Suzuki, adapted European classics, as his dialogue was with European theatre. Early in his career, he adapted Jean Genet's ritualistic play *The Blacks* to a Cree social context, drawn to it by its parallels with Cree ceremonial culture.

While studying in Italy, Favel collaborated with Rena Mirecka and Ewa Benesz, former Polish Theatre Laboratory actors. They focused on theatre not as a public performance, but as a healing art fostering contact between participants. This experience shaped his view of theatre as a "Younger Sibling of Tradition" (Favel, 2013), a vehicle for cultural and human development.

While these principal sources have shaped Favel's work, he considers his early training on the reserve with his grandmother, mother, and cousin as foundational. He recalls nights spent listening to stories by lantern light, where voice change, intonations, gestures, and shadows brought characters to life. His mother would tell tales like *Les Misérables* in Cree and English, teaching the children about the universality of stories and the importance of grounding them in one's own culture and language. These storytelling nights, deeply embedded in his spirit, continue to influence him.

Favel spent decades developing his theories and collaborating with artists and scholars. However, it was his meeting with Sabina Sweta Sen-Podstawska that catalyzed the active formulation of a working method based on Indigenous performance principles, leading to the

Sarasa Performance Lab. For seven years, we refined our methods through adaptations of classics like Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* and Euripides' *Trojan Women*, presenting our progress at Poundmaker Festivals (excerpts available at the Sarasa Performance Lab. (website: <https://sarasaperformancelab.com> and the YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@miyawatacultureinc.1675/featured>) and publishing our research outcomes (Sen-Podstawska & Favel, 2022, 2023). This collaboration was crucial for developing our Indigenous creative research process into a practice open to all. Sen-Podstawska, with her Polish and Indian heritage, significantly influenced our work through her Polish and Bengali languages, songs, and cultures. Her training in Odissi dance provided a foundation upon which we integrated Plains Indian Sign Language and the Winter Count method, seeking to tell Indigenous stories where every scene embodies Indigenous vocal and bodily expressions. Her upbringing in Kolkata, steeped in the spiritual beliefs, aesthetics, and performance techniques of the Indian subcontinent, allowed her to deeply appreciate and engage with Cree rituals, land, and community, ultimately breathing life into Favel's theories and methodology.

Dancing with the Ghosts in *Sweet Cherry Wine*: Sarasa Performance Lab's Transcultural Creative Transformations through NpC Methodology

Cree People believe in their dreams, considering them messages from the Spirit World, and one can alter one's life to follow a dream, says Favel. Although not acknowledged by mainstream academia, dreams are seen by Indigenous scholars as "portals for gaining knowledge" (Kovach, 2009, p. 67) or discovering life's purpose (Stonechild, 2016, p. 61). In a similar vein, NpC methodology and the Miyawata-Sarasa Culture site (Fig. 1) emerged from Floyd's dreams (Sen-Podstawska & Favel, 2022).

Upon leaving Italy, Favel dreamt of Grotowski buried in his ancestral graveyard under a Christian cross. Favel interprets the cross as theatre itself—a foreign, colonial art form—that NpC is meant to plant in Indigenous soil. This dream, and the desire to fully indigenize their theatre process beyond European dialogue, came to fruition in the summer work of 2025. Feeling prepared to create his own drama, Favel chose to revisit "Sweet Cherry Wine," a short story written after his mother's death in 1996. He believes his dramas, like all Indigenous traditions, originate from the spirit world or dreams, thus guiding Indigenous performance to be influenced by this supernatural source.



Fig. 1 The Sarasa Culture Site on Poundmaker Cree Nation Reserve, Saskatchewan, Canada. July 2025. Photo. Sabina Sweta Sen-Podstawska

Besides dreams, in Favel's theatre work, the story is the base and the medium through which his Cree Indigenous culture is transmitted and taught. The significance of story in Indigenous methodologies has been widely discussed, and it amounts to what Thomas King expressed: "The truth about stories is that that's all we are" (King, 2003, p. 63). Grotowski also used to say that any theatrical exploration must be grounded in a text, a story. Indigenous theatre has as its source and reference point the realm of sacred and social oral stories told by storytellers. For Favel, storytelling has seven main principles, or entities (understood as beings with their own energies and possibilities), that guide its delivery. They are as follows:

1. Plains Indigenous Pictographs and Winter Counts System that include image, action and narrative. Lakota Winter Count (Waniyetu Wohapi) is a traditional record-keeping system, or a calendar, where each winter's significant event is depicted as a pictograph. Pictographs can reflect style and presentation and are drawn in a supernatural manner.

2. Light and shadow illuminated by fire, lantern light, and sunlight, and cast on the transparent walls of the canvas tent.
3. Plains Indian Sign Language (PISL) and gestures that follow the syntactic structure of the Indigenous language, with the stress on verbs, so being action-oriented.
4. Specialized or sacred space and architecture that is a small confined space of a nomadic tent transparent to inner light, like a lantern or larger structures built following Indigenous cosmology.
5. Song and Indigenous instruments, which are governed by rhythms and melodies specific to the lands of their origin.
6. Indigenous Language reflecting the worldview, epistemology and axiology.
7. Super-objective, as defined by Konstantin Stanislavski, is a forward driving line of narrative action that binds the story together and also is the platform for physical action and impulse according to Grotowski's performance theory (Richards, 1995).

These seven storytelling principles and performance entities were the foundation of our creative research process with *Sweet Cherry Wine*, a tale of love, betrayal, forgiveness, and healing. The three performers and researchers, Māori dancer and artist from Aotearoa, New Zealand, Charles Koroneho, a Syilx performer and artist from Okanagan, Mariel Belanger, and Sen-Podstawska, began the explorations into text and storytelling. Favel, as the writer and director, broke down the central dramatic elements into four acts of the play, using the principles of the Winter Count system. After creating the core narrative images, Favel began staging the story, aiming to embed it within the Indigenous vocal and physical cultures of the performers. The setting was a Plains Indigenous architectural space—a ceremonial lodge designed with Cree cosmology and Mandan earth lodge inspiration (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2 ...



Fig. 2 (cont.) The lodge built by Floyd Favel at the cultural site on Poundmaker Cree Nation Reserve, used by the Sarasa Performance Lab. and the community as a place for ceremony, storytelling and performance. Photos. Sabina Sweta Sen-Podstawska.



Figs. 3 - 6 Belanger, Koroneho and Sen-Podstawska performing *Sweet Cherry Wine* inside the lodge. July 2025. Photos. Jeanette Kotowich.

This approach, rooted in Indigenous ways of vocalizing text and song, and in traditional movement and posture within ritual and social structures, forms a technical base for our theatrical practice. This foundation led us to propose Indigenous performance as an artistic genre accessible to all, transcending colonial identities and divisions.

The addition of Koroneho and Belanger allowed us the opportunity to implement one of our research premises on performance, in that some of the scenes can remain open and changeable, based on another specific Indigenous culture and can then be a base in which to explore other Indigenous cultures globally. The scenes with Syilx and Cree songs, Syilx dance movements, Plains Cree sitting positions, PISL, set within the ceremonial lodge and the presence of Cree and Canadian audiences, helped us to ground the reality of *Sweet Cherry Wine* into a Canadian context while honoring Māori, Polish, and Bengali expressions evoked by Cree stories but originating from their own respective contexts. Through the use of language and the use of the chorus or another actor and their Indigenous expressive and communicative techniques, we can transplant our research into another culture and people worldwide and still express Indigenous performance as an artistic genre.

This setting, the land and ceremonial space are at the core of our methodology, as discussed through Sen-Podstawska's experience in the adaptation of *Uncle Vanya*, where a holistic and visceral experience of the land, a reciprocal listening and honoring of the place and its beings, an attentive and deep immersion into ceremony, nurtured her creative process and expressions (Sen-Podstawska & Favel, 2022). So, it was a vital reassurance when Koroneho and Belanger, in their reflections, also emphasized the location of the work - the Sarasa Culture site, embedded in Indigenous ceremony and community. Koroneho identifies it "as a creative catalyst for the multifaceted approach and theatre methodologies we explored in all aspects of the play" (Koroneho, personal communication, August 12, 2025), and Belanger points to the transformational and transportable qualities, enabling one to connect with the past and engage in a healing experience (Belanger, 2025).

With Favel's ancestral stories expressed through Belanger's English narration interspersed with Syilx words, songs and movements, Koroneho's embodiment of horse and human spirits and honoring of deceased ancestors through his Māori movement, gestures and voice techniques and Sen-Podstawska's physical actions built upon the coalescence of PISL with Bengali and Polish songs and narration layered with personal associations and memories, we began to lift the story to a ghost or spirit world. This ghost and spirit quality is essential for Indigenous performance as it transforms contemporary performance into a sacred and ritual art, which is what any research into Indigenous performance must delve into. For Indigenous people, storytelling is based on the distant spiritual and heroic past and it is a ritual process. Following Shawn Wilson, we understand this creative research process as a ceremony, which requires the participants "to be ready to step beyond the everyday and to accept a raised

state of consciousness” (2008, p. 69). It was the same with *Sweet Cherry Wine*, as it is based on an actual racial murder of a young Indigenous man by white farmers in a local town, so it was about ghosts, and we must pay our respects and be precise about it.

In our performance, we dance primarily for the ghosts of our ancestors, honoring them by performing their stories. Though the public is invited to witness, our true audience and participants in this ritual act, as in our ceremonies, are those in the other world. Following the Cree traditional ways, many but not all Cree ceremonies are called in Cree “simōwin” (dances), such as the Round dance, Ghost dance, Prairie Chicken dance, Sun dance, and Horse dance. In these ceremonial dancing, we always acknowledge the ancestors who have gone on, and so it is with Indigenous performance as we conceive it.

The Spirit World, the Unknown, and the Unconscious are also the shadows of theatre; it is the double as French dramatist Antonin Artaud theorized. Favel formulated this equation: $Fa \text{ (family) } [H \text{ (healing) } (Tr \text{ (tradition) } \times Pr \text{ (process)})] = Th^2$, which presents NpC’s constituents and its processual quality. While we refer to NpC as a methodology, it is necessary to point out that the experience is more than that; it is, as Monique Mojica, one of Favel’s early collaborators, noted about Favel’s approach, it is “the transformative journey to the stage (and back to our origins) simply - process” (2013, p. 130). So, in this process, the Family is understood as multigenerational and embracing the community established within the theatrical space. By multiplying Tradition with Process, one arrives at the Theatre doubled, inspired by Artaud’s *Theatre and Its Double* (2013). For Favel, the addition of the Spirit World to the performance creates this double, also an extra daily state (Barba & Savarese, 1991, p. 7) that offers those engaged in the process a spiritual and healing experience.

Artaud proposed that theatre had a cathartic purpose, to cleanse and heal society when viewing the theatre. Our drama, *Sweet Cherry Wine*, serves this function as it allows us to express how Canadian colonialism has ravaged our people, and for us, theatre can be a healing art leading to decolonization. Each artist admitted having undergone a deep personal and transformative experience through the creative process:

We learn quickly that our actions are echoes from the past, reverberations of lived experiences repeated through colonial linear time. Experiences remembered and retold through story. The catharsis one experiences, giving voice to the experiences of the past, is a whole mind and body experience. As a late-in-life-diagnosed bipolar Indigenous person, my experience with the spirit world bleeds into everyday life, sometimes. [...] Favel, through gentle persuasion, transports us around the wood stove of the lodge in a spiral connecting us in the present through ceremony and performance to the silenced voices of the past and speaking their truths (Belanger, 2025).

A clear personal response to the unique environment of the play was my engagement in developing a strategy of evocation, as an act of summoning or calling upon feelings,

memories, or images appropriate to the formation of an Indigenous performance space. Evocation as creative research was explored through Indigenous languages, incantation, songs, ancestral bodies and movements (C. Koroneho, personal communication, August 12, 2025).

Sen-Podstawska refers to her multilayered creative and performative process that ultimately led to a cathartic experience inside the ceremonial lodge, which she says, came out as a release through floods of tears accompanied with words, melodies, movements and places of contact, holding each other in songs, glances, touches, gestures, signs and languages, she transformed into a state of forgiveness fully reembracing love and hope. Finally, Favel explains that for Cree, reality is comprised of molecules of love and tears, as that is how the world was created.

In viewing the work of the actors, of Sen-Podstawska as she told the story of the elderly lady, of Koroneho who expressed the story of a man visiting his dying mother, and of Belanger, who expressed the heroism of an Indigenous woman struggling to find love and healing, helped me to realize, through their own tears, that Indigenous performance and story can only be born from our own peoples and our own suffering and tears.

These stories speak about the aftermath of colonialism and ongoing intergenerational traumas that the Indigenous people in Canada and elsewhere battle with. In explaining meaningful decolonizing practices as being not just about theory and practice, Linda Tuhiwai Smith highlights: “they all rest upon the principles of relationships, connections, reciprocity and accountability that are embedded in Indigenous understandings of ethics and knowledge and, in my view, are foundational to decolonizing theory and praxis” (2021, xiii).

By taking on the stories embedded in *Sweet Cherry Wine*, in this ritual drama, the artists faced their own traumas and wounds while honoring the experiences of the people of this land – a process of healing followed as a result. Being able to come out of that space of fear, anger, and shame of the colonial repercussions, one is able to move out of it, go beyond it, cleanse oneself, and clear the space for the future, walking on the pathway of decolonization and indigenization.

Extending and Integrating the NpC in Higher Education.

Initially, NpC was created primarily for the creative research process for theatre practitioners. To extend its reach, Favel has taught the NpC as a creative research process in universities in Canada and in Poland. Favel observes that Canadian universities often overlook the sophisticated nature of Indigenous storytelling and performance, frequently dismissing it as primitive or unstructured. Instead, the focus remains on written dramas by playwrights, whose Indigenous identities vary widely and are often questionable. Favel,

however, advocates for Indigenous storytelling as an inclusive genre, fundamental to building a truly national theatre – one that is deeply rooted in and representative of the Indigenous peoples of this land. To ignore this is to relegate theatre to a colonial art form, an import from across the Big Water – the Atlantic Ocean – rather than an authentic expression of this land.

While NpC fits within the traditions of Practice as Research, understood as “a *being-doing-thinking* that can generate new knowing across a range of intra-disciplines, and is entangled in an ethical dimension” (Nelson, 2022, p. 19), in teaching NpC to theatre students in Canadian universities, Favel has formulated a course on Indigenous storytelling and performance, tailored for university grading systems, while retaining the primary focus on the practical application of pictographs, winter counts, and sign languages and personal origin stories, with introductions and songs in storytelling. Besides such goals as appreciation of Indigenous stories, developing cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity, and performance skills, the course also aimed for a deeper understanding of Indigenous stories in their connection with Creation, carrying further the sacred traditions along with moral conduct in daily life and solace in difficult moments (Favel, 2023). Students who attended his course noticed the change in their perspective; as one of them wrote:

Your teachings about storytelling, winter count, and Plain Indian Sign Language (PISL) have broadened my views and understanding of how to communicate, elements to consider in creating and conveying stories, and, most importantly, from my perspective, how to make sure I create space for Indigenous perspectives as compared to Western perspectives (C. Mao, personal communication, March 31, 2023).

In Poland, at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Favel offered a condensed form of this course through a series of lectures and workshops in April 2024. It was addressed primarily to MA students of Culture Media and Translation Studies, who were already working with Indigenous methodologies in their MA projects. Students engaged in hands-on storytelling exercises with Favel, utilizing the NpC method, pictographs, Winter Count, PISL, and string figures (Figs. 7-8).

This experience pushed the students beyond typical English studies into movement, singing, storytelling and gestural performance. Despite initial discomfort, they found it eye-opening, transforming their understanding of Indigenous stories and storytelling. The training profoundly impacted their MA research, leading them to respectfully center and elevate Indigenous voices, methodologies and philosophies in their dissertations, incorporating personal reflexivity and acknowledging their own transformative learning. The students' experience directly manifests what Wilson reminds us of the essence of Indigenous research methodologies: “If research doesn’t change you as a person, then you haven’t done it right” (2008, p. 135). These successful applications of NpC as an Indigenous storytelling performance and research process in higher educational scenarios prove how indigenization “involves elevating the voices of Indigenous peoples, elevating traditional and cultural

knowledge, and intentional inclusion of Indigenous ways of teaching and learning to form and create pedagogical approaches” (Queen's University, n.d.).



Fig. 7 Exercises with Winter Counts and pictographs, at the workshop led by Floyd Favel at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland. April 2024. Photo. Karolina Palusińska.



Fig 8. Participants presenting their stories through gestures, pictographs, and string figures at the workshop led by Floyd Favel at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland. April 2024. Photo. Karolina Palusińska

Concluding Reflections

The Native Performance Culture (NpC) as a learning, research, and creative methodology in performance and storytelling cultivates transformative experiences, enabling discoveries about oneself and one's roots, which itself is a form of healing. As a decolonizing and indigenizing tool, it also contributes to the empowerment of communities by bringing Indigenous ways and stories to the forefront of performance as techniques of expression and acknowledging their histories and worldviews. By recognizing Indigenous performance as an artistic genre equal to any other and fostering Indigenous epistemologies in the transcultural creative process, the NpC method gears towards an equitable societal shift. It offers vital pathways towards sustainable growth and creative futures by inviting and opening spaces for exploration for all people with an awareness of relational coexistence, as well as dismantling and reshaping institutional and colonial practices.

Favel's personal educational journey was influenced by seminal theatre figures in the world and his ancestors; the development of the methodology weaving Indigenous dreams, stories, spirits, gestures, voices, movements and knowledges and prioritizing relational, intergenerational and community and land based pedagogical conditioning embody what Favel had once expressed: "This is what NpC is all about, sitting at the knees and feet of our ancestors and elders" (2009, p. 35). To me, says Sen-Podstawski, as an Odissi dancer, it is reminiscent of the *Guru-Shishya parampara*, the "teacher-disciple lineage," where sitting at the guru's feet embodies the spirit of a sacred bond that transcends conventional education, fostering a deep and transformative connection, fostering an intimate and holistic education that nurtures their intellectual, spiritual, physical and emotional growth. It is like a new root or an animal/human traveler traversing along the older living roots of the Indian rubber fig tree (*Ficus elastica*) in the Indigenous lands of Khasis in Meghalaya, in north-east India, that form the aerial bridges across rivers in the dense tropical forests.

Those roots grow over decades upon and along the older roots, becoming an ever-stronger structure, providing a natural and ingenious support to several beings within that ecosystem. In kindred spirit, the passage from *Sweet Cherry Wine* quoted in the opening of this essay is a reminder about the living roots of the trees in the forest holding the earth together. Nature constantly teaches us, in our daily life and in our creative research process with NpC, that by holding on to the living roots, we can survive, learn, and grow; that is, all our learning and nourishment come from remaining connected to all our relations in the past, our ancestors and Creation and in the present, our kin and extending into the future generations.

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Practice, Gender and Culture: Teachers' Practices and Discourses

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Abstract

This chapter investigates how cultural repertoires and gender relations are manifested in the professional practices of teachers at a public elementary school in Minas Gerais, Brazil. Grounded in Cultural Studies and Michel Foucault's theory of power, the research employs qualitative methods, including classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. It explores teachers' representations of the school institution, their positioning within it, and the challenges they encounter in their daily practice. Furthermore, the study examines how cultural dynamics intersect with power relations, and how the interface between teachers' and students' cultural backgrounds necessitates both personal and collective transformation. Foucault's conceptualization of power informs the critical analysis of gendered cultural practices, while also emphasizing the importance of recognizing cultural plurality within educational contexts. The central question guiding the study is whether teaching reproduces a maternal role or embodies a broader form of care and availability. Theoretical contributions from Contreras, Muraro, and Rivera inform the discussion of the maternal dimension in school life, while Bakhtin's concept of polyphony is employed to interpret the multiplicity of voices embedded in teachers' discourse. Findings suggest that pedagogical practices are significantly shaped by gendered cultural repertoires reflected in teachers' representations.

These practices are characterized by a desire to teach grounded in care, receptivity, and the incorporation of students' lived experiences-challenging idealized conceptions of the maternal figure in education. Ultimately, the study contributes to ongoing debates on how teachers are constituted as educational subjects through multiple discourses-pedagogical, religious, media-related, among others-and aligns with a Foucauldian call for continuous problematization of educational practices.

Keywords

Culture; Gender; Maternal Role; Power Relations; Teaching practice

Introduction

From our perspective, every concept is inherently limited. Therefore, to prevent potential misunderstandings, we find it necessary to begin this chapter by clearly defining the terms sex and gender. The concept of gender is employed here to denote a broader construct than sex-functioning as one among many distinctions that shape individual identities.

While the category of gender encompasses biological aspects, these alone are insufficient to explain the differences between masculinity and femininity, or the unequal distribution of power between the sexes in Western societies (Laqueur, 1999). Although men and women exhibit distinct biological characteristics, such distinctions are historically constructed. From birth, individuals are integrated into institutions that teach them how to become men or women. Gender, therefore, represents a cultural dimension - a social construct that is learned, represented, institutionalized, and transmitted across generations.

From a cultural standpoint, Jean Chesneaux (1996) argues that the contemporary world-shaped by globalization and the international circulation of goods and cultural forms-presents a unified frame of reference for Chinese leaders, European bureaucrats, politicians from the Global South and various populations alike. According to Chesneaux, the tangible environment, defined by a region's natural, social, or cultural specificities, becomes insignificant when compared to the anonymity of large metropolitan areas, which are governed by global technological and economic logics. At the same time, however, an increasing number of minority voices are asserting their presence and seeking recognition for regional, local, religious, and other specific identities.

As Wortmann and Veiga Neto (2001) note, Cultural Studies "remove scientific practice and knowledge from the exclusive domain of Epistemology and bring any discussion of such practice and knowledge into the world of everyday life" (p. 21). In this sense, as Costa (2001) explains,

[...] to describe, discuss, and critically examine scientific practice and knowledge, one must adopt perspectives and utilize analytical tools that are neither strictly situated within the scientific disciplines under analysis, nor derived from what might be termed intuitive, commonsense, or folk knowledge (p. 23)

Cultural practices within schools are thus understood not only as activities traditionally associated with formal educational content-such as reading books, journals, and newspapers; films; attending theatrical or musical performances; visiting museums; doing field trips-but also as practices rooted in each student's personal history, including family traditions, regional customs, and religious beliefs. These elements are frequently absent from curricular frameworks and overlooked in teacher education programs. Nevertheless, they are undeniably present in the everyday experiences of committed educators, and it becomes our responsibility to critically examine their potential implications.

We argue that teachers' ways of thinking and acting-whether adapting to or transforming established school practices; embracing or marginalizing youth expressions; engaging with students' diverse familial backgrounds; or intervening in school life-are expressions of an institutionalized culture that often fails to accommodate the multiplicity of historical and identity-based contexts present in schools. The discourse teachers produce about their own work reveals the influence of pedagogical, religious, media, and other narratives, that have contributed to shaping them as educational subjects.

Addressing cultural practices related to gender, therefore, involves engaging with the dynamics of difference and the social struggles that emerge within power relations-relations which, as Foucault (1999a, 1999b, 1999c) suggests, are not fixed but constantly shifting as new subjects and practices are constituted in society.

This inquiry raises several questions: Have cultural issues related to gender and educational practices resonated within the school context? What do teachers say? How do they explain their personal, professional, and institutional positions? How do they perceive and critique the school as an institution? What challenges have they encountered over the course of their personal and professional trajectories? These and other guiding questions structure the reflections offered in this article, which draws on interviews conducted with teachers. The aim of this chapter is to understand the impact of teachers' cultural repertoires on their pedagogical practices, and to explore how cultural practices and gender intersect and are expressed in both teaching and teachers' everyday professional experiences.

In Brazil today, the majority of elementary and secondary school teachers are women. Could this demographic factor influence how cultural practices are enacted in teaching? What are the links between these practices and gender? Does teaching merely reproduce the maternal role, or does it instead represent a form of care and availability?

This chapter approaches these questions through the lens of Cultural Studies (Wortmann & Veiga Neto, 2001), Foucault's (1999a, 1999b, 1999c) conceptualization of power relations, and the theoretical contributions of Mikhail Bakhtin (2008) regarding polyphony of voices, developed through his analysis of Dostoevsky's novels-from *Poor Folk* to *The Brothers Karamazov*. In the school setting, multiple voices overlap, creating a polyphonic texture composed of both dominant discourses that structure the institution and dissonant voices that challenge these structures, enabling the emergence of new relationships and diverse cultural expressions. These perspectives provide the analytical foundation for this study.

The aim of this chapter is precisely to investigate whether and how, despite the pervasive influence of economic and cultural globalization, the dissonant voice of diversity-expressed through teachers' cultural practices-impacts school education. Our central concern is to examine teachers' words as interpreters, readers, and listeners who actively participate in the construction of meaning.

To this end, we analyzed the texts generated from semi-structured interviews conducted in 2010 with both male and female teachers representing each of the subjects taught at the elementary and high school levels in a public school located in a city in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. The analysis focused on identifying traces, clues, and indicators within these narratives to understand how cultural practices and gender-related issues emerge in the pedagogical activities of the interviewees.

2. Cultural practices and gender in education

In examining how gender and cultural practices permeate the educational context, our objective was not to reveal definitive truths about teachers or their practices, but rather to identify indicators that may help explain how they have been constituted as educators. One of the key concepts explored in this discussion is that of difference, which is relevant both to gender issues and to cultural practices. Our understanding of difference is articulated by Silva (2000, p. 42) as follows:

In some multiculturalist perspectives, cultural difference is regarded as an inherent aspect of social life that must be respected. In contrast, poststructuralist theoretical perspectives, conceptualize difference as a social and discursive process, strictly intrinsically tied to the production of meaning. In philosophical terms, the term philosophy of difference refers to certain contemporary philosophical trends that place difference at the center of analysis - thus opposing dialectical philosophies. These latter approaches are often critiqued for resolving contradiction through the logic of the negation of negation, which ultimately reaffirms identity and sameness.

Gender issues, therefore, relate to a field of struggle-a dynamic interplay of relationships-between men and women for power and meaning. Foucault's work has taught us, as educators, to ask different kinds of questions in our research. Rather than posing essentialist

questions such as what it means or what it does not mean to be a man or a woman, we are more interested in asking how one becomes a man or a woman. It is from this perspective that Foucault introduces the notion of plurality. In the context of this study, the focus is on cultural plurality, with a conscious effort to avoid absolutizing gender issues and cultural practices in human relations.

Through the teachers' testimonies, we aim to observe who they are becoming and what their life stories and relationships have enabled them to do. At the same time, we recognize that these identities and practices are not fixed or final—they can also allow themselves to become different from what has already been established.

In education, we may find the human capacity to experience the joy of creating and recreating knowledge through art, in everyday life—knowledge that speaks about ourselves, about life, and about the world in which we live, seeking meanings rooted in lived experience. This is a political task, one that teachers—particularly given the majority presence of women in the teaching profession—could and should embrace. And indeed, many are already doing so.

Historically, in Brazil, the feminization of basic education was institutionally reinforced by legislation, since normal schools—teacher-training institutions—were specifically intended for girls under the age of 25, who were thus legally designated for the teaching profession under the regulations of the time. Gallo (2002) refers to "higher education:

It is the realm of ten-year plans and public education policies, of parameters and guidelines, of the constitution and the LDB — conceived and produced by well-intentioned minds in the service of power. Higher education is that which has been instituted and seeks to be instituted, to be present, and to assert itself. Higher education is that of grand designs and projects (p. 173).

It is the one that governs the educational process — constituted as the set of structures that combine control and scientificity, such as the order of planning and the established instruments — understood as a causal relationship. Similarly, Contreras (2005, p. 32) points out how such practices have generated depersonalized routines that, for this very reason, disqualify and displace teachers' own knowledge. As Contreras writes:

[...] the relationship that exists between this knowledge and the sources from which they learn it, which is none other than the experience of love, from where precisely arises (for those who are in this profession out of desire, and not due to other circumstances) what fundamentally supports teachers in their work: the desire to be with children and young people, to share experiences with them, and to be able to guide them, to share the world with them, in pursuit of a fuller life.

When Contreras (2005) speaks of these experiences of love, he is referring to the place from which the desire to care for and teach others arises—a place that precedes formal teacher training, and that can be understood as a re-creation permeated by the art of making daily life

new and different. We understand these as experiences that resonate with what Sílvia Gallo calls "minor education", as they constitute acts of resistance against dominant flows and imposed policies. They are marked by the deterritorialization of educational macroprocesses and by the sensitive creation of "loving" solutions developed by the teachers themselves to address everyday difficulties.

Both Contreras (2006) and Rivera (2003, p. 67) understand that fundamental life experiences are constructed in the relationship with the mother: "[...] the one who can offer an experience of love that helps the child to establish a linguistic and experiential order in understanding themselves and the world. The matrix of life is also the matrix of the word."

According to Contreras (2006, p. 32):

It is usually from our mother that we first learn how to orient ourselves in the world and in life. It is with her-and through our earliest relationships-that we begin to construct a sense of the world, as we simultaneously learn to speak. This educational task is intimately connected to that initial sense of learning and expanding one's understanding of the world, while engaging in relationships in ways that are appropriate to each moment and each need.

To be, as an educator, a mediator between the social and cultural world and the realities and needs of our students-or a mediator in the search for new possibilities of being that each individual can explore-has, as its first experience, a relationship of loving care, one that is attentive to need, possibility, and opportunity.

By exploring cultural practices, gender, and teaching activities, this research reflects on education-and, more specifically, on teacher education-as a set of human actions that occur among human beings (Louro, 1997; Rivera, 2003; Muraro, 1994). Schools can play a distinct role-not only as reproducers of hegemonic norms, but also as generators of practices imbued with new meanings, cultural identities, and power relations. This perspective is skeptical of any universalizing knowledge that seeks to reduce institutions, laws, or human needs to formulas claiming to offer invariant and definitive answers.

To speak of cultural issues is to address the game of differences, in which the rules are defined through the social struggles of subjects who, for various reasons, experience the effects of discrimination and prejudice within the societies they inhabit, embedded in relations of power.

The context in which the discourse of these groups emerges is essential for interpreting the meanings of the positions occupied by men and women in the contemporary world. Investigating the origins of such discourse and the effects of their utterances enables a (re)evaluation of the representations produced within schools and the possibilities for constituting the subjects who operate within them. The subject positions occupied by men and women have been constituted and embedded in language, symbols, fantasies, rules,

conventions, and representations of gender difference. Gender and sexual identities are composed, defined, and mediated through socially constructed networks of power.

This is, on one hand, where our understanding of culture and our approach to the texts constructed by the interviewees converge. That is, when we understand culture as a set of meanings shared by the members of a given group, situated in a specific time and place, we must also understand that these meanings, in their production and circulation, are always mediated by language-and that meaning is constructed dialogically.

On the other hand, drawing on the work of Bakhtin (1995, 2008), we recognize the particular characteristics of the text, which carries within it the memory of other texts. It is "crossed" by many other texts-texts that may or may not be explicitly related to it. Based on these assumptions, it becomes clear that simply decoding the signals emitted by the speaker-in this case, the teachers-is not enough. It is the responsibility of the interlocutor/listener/reader to establish connections between the text and its context. These connections can take multiple forms and are essential to a deeper understanding of both text and context.

In constructing these relationships, the production of inferences becomes crucial, since no text contains, explicitly, all the information required for its complete understanding. It is the interlocutor/reader/listener-specifically, the researcher-who must identify and interpret the implicit elements in order to construct meaning and generate the reading that unveils the world under investigation. The researcher's inferences are drawn from their own knowledge of the world, as well as from what is shared with the research subjects-their common knowledge. In this process of inference-making-grounded above all in shared knowledge-we find the daily repercussions of other cultural practices in the interviewees' lives, including the art of re-creating meanings, beyond those already crystallized as belonging to school routines. These are evidenced in the teachers' statements and in the observations made within the school setting.

In this way, the same school practice-when permeated by the diverse cultural practices of those involved-becomes, when shared through language, a polyphonic text, in which the stories and subjectivities of these teachers are inscribed. And what about gender issues-how were they addressed?

Louro (1999, pp. 88-89), in her analysis of gender and teaching, points out that, for some scholars, teaching is essentially feminine, since it involves caring for, attending to, and accompanying children-traits traditionally associated with motherhood. However, for others, schooling is a practice centered on knowledge-its selection, production, and transmission-which, according to the standards of contemporary society, is considered a masculine activity. For Louro, these arguments reinforce the idea that "school is permeated by gender," both in its conception and in its execution-just as, in our view, texts are permeated by other texts.

This intersection of texts within other texts, both inside and outside school, and this polyphony that shapes gender issues within the school context, are themselves embedded in broader power dynamics, in the relations of force analyzed by Foucault (1999a), which we invoke here as a way of denaturalizing the differences between men and women that appear in the discourse of the teachers interviewed. The focus on femininity is justified by the overwhelming presence of women in elementary and secondary education (the focus of this study), a presence historically reinforced and legitimized by the discourse surrounding women's "natural" aptitude for childcare. This constant reproduction of discourse overlooks the fact that gender is not an essential human trait. What gender is, what women and men are, and the types of relationships formed between them are not simply biological expressions, but rather socially and culturally constituted subjectivities.

As previously mentioned, a number of problematizations have served as guiding forces in this study, oriented toward the production of new knowledge. How is diversity-reflected in the need to integrate teachers, boys, and girls into social life-dealt with within school institutions? How do teachers describe, analyze, and interpret their practices? What meanings do they assign to them? What do they believe they are accomplishing, and how do they express it? What strategies do they construct-how and why? What actions, attitudes, and situations do they observe in which children or their families act as agents of school integration? Regarding material space: what meanings do physical school environments hold in everyday life? What relationships can be established between gender and multiculturalism? And with the curriculum? What kinds of transformations or adaptations occur within the institutional sphere in response to the increasing presence of difference in schools?

These problematizations guided the analysis of the interviews conducted with public school teachers in the state of Minas Gerais, and of the texts through which we sought to engage in critical dialogue.

Paths Traveled

Recovering the history of teachers to explain the different ways in which they constituted and produced their cultural practices, and examining to what extent their cultural repertoire impacts their pedagogical practices-motivating their teaching experiences and professional transformations-were strategies employed to value lived stories and experiences, as well as to analyze and interpret them.

How can we describe the observed fact or event and understand the collected narrative, in which we express our interpretation based on our subjectivity? How can we communicate to readers that such understanding does not constitute revealed truth but remains open to alternative perspectives? In this chapter, we seek to achieve specific objectives by charting paths without, however, prescribing them.

Machado (1999), in the introduction to the book *Microphysics of Power*-a volume he organized bringing together texts by Michel Foucault-states that the French philosopher sought to create a history of knowledge with the aim of:

[...] neutralize the idea that science is a form of knowledge in which the subject overcomes the limitations of its particular conditions of existence by establishing itself within the objective neutrality of the universal. [...] All knowledge, whether scientific or ideological, can only exist based on political conditions that serve as the foundation for the formation of both the subject and the domains of knowledge. The investigation of knowledge should not refer to a subject of knowledge as its origin, but rather to the power relations that constitute it (p. xxi).

What is relevant to the author is not the method employed to arrive at knowledge, but the problematizations formulated regarding the relationship between knowledge and power. In this investigation, we were interested in understanding how the various relationships between knowledge and power are and have been constituted in everyday school life. Indeed, we seek to understand the meaning of the phenomena experienced by drawing on detailed observations of the different spaces within the school and interviews with teachers from various fields of knowledge, paving the way for a continuous reconstruction of knowledge. At the same time, we understand that we are not confronting epistemological relativism, but rather aiming to rethink epistemology by incorporating other elements into its concept, such as power, interest, and affectivity.

Popkewitz and Brennan (1998, p.09, apud Cesar, M. R 2008, p. 30) use the term "social epistemology" to describe this form of research, which seeks to reveal the conditions under which discourses produce truths, subjects, and objects. For them:

The words and commandments of schooling are not signs or meanings that refer to fixed things, but rather to social practices through generative principles that order action and participation. The concept of epistemology used here refers to an effort to understand the conditions under which knowledge is produced. [...] A social epistemology studies discourses as effects of power.

In this sense, representation and meaning are continually shaped by historical processes and transformation; consequently, they do not simply register pre-existing meanings but actively participate in the constitution of subjects and social groups. From this perspective, teachers are produced within and through representation; in other words, our conceptualisations of facts contribute to the very construction of those facts.

We began from the perspective that school spaces are also places of production for individuals, both teachers and students. Thus, children who interact in the school environment from a very young age develop cultural traits acquired in this environment. According to Vilela and Villaça Koch: "[...] the mere decoding of the signals emitted by the speaker is by no means sufficient: it is the responsibility of the reader-listener to establish

relationships of various types between the elements of the text and the entire context in order to understand them as a whole and interpret them appropriately to the situation" (2001, p. 423).

In contrast, the school environment is also an important ally for teachers, as it is there, in everyday life, that experiences are acquired and shared with their students, in a constant exchange where everyone absorbs new information. This exchange helps to dispel the old maxim that teachers should leave their problems outside the classroom and, inside, become a being who does not feel and has nothing beyond the content planned to teach. However, it is certainly necessary to exercise discretion when it comes to being transparent in the classroom. By debunking this myth, both students and teachers can only benefit from the quality of teaching, which appears inefficient in today's educational landscape, but in which some teachers are performing very well, as evidenced in our interviews, from which we gleaned several statements.

From their daily lives, students bring knowledge and experiences to school that enrich their teachers. The Portuguese teacher recounts this experience with great satisfaction:

They often bring responses to current events happening outside, such as the ongoing situation with the referendum or the mensalão scandal, so they come with their own opinions.

The Biology teacher brought photos and took her students to specific locations to closely observe phenomena related to what they were studying, as she explains below:

For example, when I am teaching cytology or [...], I always take the students to FEU or to the medical school. Because here we do not have the equipment to study slides... we simply do not. So, the students who are interns at FEU teach laboratory classes to first-year students. Therefore, I also engage in this exchange with them.

And what about gender issues within schools? As the primary focus of our study, we considered that addressing cultural practices and gender involves discussing the interplay of differences and power relations, which can shift as new circumstances emerge. There is a distinction between men and women in this exchange of experiences. For instance, when a teacher asks students in class to change their attitudes, she does so with the same confident yet caring manner she has experienced outside of school, with her own children at home, and she already knows this approach will be effective.

In seeking to understand the discourses that produce truths, subjects, and objects, we encounter testimonies of change within the educational system, particularly concerning gender.

In the following statement, gender difference is understood as productive and dynamic rather than stagnant, as expressed by the Chemistry teacher:

The chemistry teacher here at this school said, "We are always exchanging experiences. [...] There are two men and one woman here. At the other school, there are two women and the rest are men. So we always discuss what each person is doing, and we benefit from each other's experiences. That definitely exists...".

For the History teacher, it is easier for students to approach and open up to a woman:

Oh, I'm not sure how to explain this. I experienced it myself as a student. When a teacher arrived and it was a man, as I mentioned before, he asserted greater authority in the classroom. But I see it this way: boys, in this case, don't engage in dialogue. With women, they exchange ideas outside the school context, like, "Oh, I have a problem." With a female teacher, they discuss various topics and open up, right? With men, they don't do that. Only boys do that, but generally, it's more with women-I see it that way.

Works by authors such as Louro (1999), Foucault (1999a), Silva (1999), Vilela and Koch (2001), among others, support our observation of how cultural practices complement teaching in the broader sense of enhancing, contributing to, and bringing institutions, students, and teachers closer together. As Silva (1999, p. 79) notes, "culture is seen as pedagogy, and pedagogy is seen as a cultural form." The two are deeply rooted and intertwined. We began by analyzing the interviews with the Chemistry and Mathematics teachers and their postures throughout. While the Chemistry teacher maintained a masculine posture-sitting leaning back in his chair, legs crossed in a figure-four position, and physically distanced from the interviewer-the Mathematics teacher adopted a posture more commonly used by women, sitting opposite the interviewer in a more welcoming manner. During the interview, we also identified moments that differentiated the male teacher from the female teacher, such as the latter stating that "her relationship with the teachers who work with her in the schools is harmonious, sensitive, and interesting."

At the moment mentioned above, the Chemistry teacher attempted to be very direct in his answers and acknowledged the problems he brought into the classroom but did not share them with the students. This behavior reflects a typically male characteristic of withholding conflicts and responding with brevity, as evidenced in the following statement:

The whole issue is that you arrive in class upset, you're sad, and the students notice-some even comment on it. But then you begin the lesson, move around here and there, and soon your sadness dissipates, renews itself, and you carry on. Now, I agree that we shouldn't pretend; we have to bring our whole selves into the classroom. If you're sad: "Are you sad, teacher? [...] I am, but it will pass."

The Math teacher is more sensitive and can share and perceive problems with her students: I believe so; I know these children so well that I can tell when they are experiencing problems at home - we are even aware of that. I think integration must be total; there is no halfway. Either we give ourselves completely, or we do not give ourselves at all.

Cultural practices and gender are closely intertwined, and the interviews we conducted clearly demonstrate this. When the chemistry teacher describes his interactions with his students, he reveals a somewhat more distant attitude, one typically attributed to male teachers. While they share experiences and learn from their students, there is never a distinct affection that might be called "maternal," as this type of affection is still predominantly attributed to women—an attitude shaped by a sexist discourse that remains prevalent in society. We perceive that cultural practices are embedded differently for men and women because their cultural constructions also differ.

With the math teacher, we observed, throughout, a genuinely maternal attitude manifested in all her gestures, her memories of classes, and her interactions with students, as can be seen in the excerpt from the interview below:

So, in the first week, I already want to know everyone's name, I try to find out information about each of them... and another thing I discovered over time is that students like love that is demanding. They like to receive affection, attention, but they also appreciate discipline; they like to be held accountable.

Often, when talking about their own experience, teachers incorporate a sacralized model of motherhood into the teaching role, the result of a strong religious discursive charge, which ends up naturalizing the roles assigned to women and men. The presence of Christian (especially Catholic) religious discourse in the speech of women teachers is evident even today in Brazil. The resulting feelings of satisfaction/guilt stem from the inability to meet all the needs of their children or students before their own and correspond to a historically and culturally established determination.

As the Math teacher tells us, teaching is a purely maternal act. However, observations made in different school spaces and the content of her testimonies lead us to a different understanding than the sacralized model of motherhood presented above. These data seem very close to what Contreras (2005) describes regarding the desire to teach, understanding that it contains the possibility of exercising truly significant freedom or autonomy for teachers. The desire to teach, sustained by the first experiences of caring for another, whether a boy or a girl, allows us to see the personal dimension of each teacher, rarely taken into account by "higher education," which regulates teaching duties. Higher education does not require the art of recreating. And, in the desire to teach, is,

[...] an experience that is lived. And it is lived more or less, better or worse, sometimes getting it right, sometimes getting it wrong. It is about thinking about it from within: the experiences from which we discover the meaning of educating (that is, of our work) and deciphering what it is linked to within ourselves (that is, what moves and requires within ourselves). It is about making the essential visible, about recovering and naming the meaning of what makes the educational experience possible through concrete, situated, singular, personalized practices, focusing on what we have become

accustomed to not seeing, what the conventional codes of the school institution ignore or silence. Because, sometimes, the institutional life of the school, which is supposed to be at the service of educational practice, becomes the fundamental concern, and we lose sight of the fact that what is important is what is ultimately at the essence of education: our lives with children and youth. (p. 12).

For Contreras, this would be the teaching work carried out in the first person: being open to the creation and recreation of oneself, in a constant process of metamorphosis. Teaching as a profession is neither a mission nor a vocation. It is constructed through a process that begins before official initial and continuing education and includes the daily practice of teaching, primarily in relation to students. To place oneself in the "first person," in Contreras's words, in the educational relationship is to place oneself, as the subject of the action, and the pedagogical action itself, under suspicion. Freedom and autonomy do not come from outside. No one grants them to us. They are something that belongs to us and that we can exercise.

The math teacher believes that what drives this desire to teach is not related to the gender of the person teaching, but to the passion with which they do so. She gave us some examples of female teachers who are passionately dedicated to their school and students, and some examples of male teachers who also maintain this attitude, despite being in the minority. She doesn't attribute this attitude to men or women, but rather to the fact that they dedicate themselves passionately to their chosen profession.

In the statements of teachers, we observed that they were able to transport knowledge and learning arising from cultural practices into the classroom, and change the way this knowledge is passed on, as well as the way of teaching and sharing. A history teacher told us that the sensitivity she acquires outside the classroom, when in contact with nature, greatly influences her behavior inside. She told us that this impacts her relationships with her students and the way she treats them. Below is an excerpt in which she describes this intertwining of feelings:

I think that sensitivity is what made me do many things in the classroom that I might not have done before. Another thing I cultivate a lot in the classroom, and I believe it's connected to this, is that I always see the students as if they were my daughters. For example, sometimes I get angry with a student for something, and then I think, if they were my child, how would I act?

The concept of sensitivity as used by the teacher, in our understanding, holds significant value when seeking to reconstruct everyday lived experiences. The Portuguese teacher reported that her daily family life greatly influences her behavior in the classroom. She explained that her experience with children leads her to perceive her students differently. Additionally, she noted that when there are no problems at home, she is able to give more attention to the class.

Regarding closeness, we also observed that all interviewed teachers expressed emotional connections to their students. They view themselves not merely as instructors of academic

content but as friends on whom their students can always rely, consistently attempting to assist them in any way possible. For example, the Portuguese teacher stated that she notices when a student is facing difficulties and always tries to understand and respect their situation. Similar to the notion of sensitivity, we emphasize the importance of emotions that permeate teacher-student relationships in the classroom context.

Understanding teachers' activities outside of school was considered essential to our study. We inquired about their leisure activities-such as social outings and time spent with family. Responses varied considerably. We found that most teachers enjoy walking, visiting farms, hiking, exploring waterfalls, traveling, attending clubs, playing soccer, and similar activities. One teacher explicitly stated that her favorite pastime is drinking beer.

After learning that all teachers enjoy movies and books, we asked whether they incorporate the films, books, and magazines they consume into their teaching practice. All expressed enthusiasm for integrating movies into their classrooms. The History teacher reported that he brings any interesting visual material he encounters to share with his students, even if it is only a brief excerpt.

Other teachers also provided examples of films they use in the classroom. Some indicated that these films are not always directly related to the subject matter they teach but are chosen because they convey messages or life lessons that students need to learn. From these accounts, we infer the teachers' concern with fostering citizenship and individual development, rather than merely transmitting content or activities. The following excerpt from the History teacher's interview illustrates his use of films that convey both content and meaningful messages for students:

[...] because all films convey some kind of message, whether it relates to life, academic content, or serves to provoke critical thinking and reflection. Our students, in particular, lack reasoning skills; they are accustomed to receiving information in a ready-made form, handed to them. This is precisely why this approach is important.

A science teacher stated that he does not particularly enjoy television programs, especially those lacking an educational purpose. He explained that when he encounters something interesting on the news, he brings it into the classroom to engage his students in discussion. By doing so, he transforms content that was not originally intended as educational into an opportunity for student growth.

The Portuguese teacher demonstrated a strong interest in music. She expressed a passion for listening to music and actively attempts to introduce it to her students. She conveyed concern when students are unfamiliar with prominent figures in music or show little interest in songs that convey messages of personal development through their lyrics. Although she does not hold prejudices against genres such as funk or other styles favored by her students, she strives to expose them to music they may not otherwise access, thereby enabling them to

discover and appreciate new musical expressions. She further noted that much of the preference for what she termed "contentless" music stems from young people's limited access to national and international cultural productions, which restricts their opportunities to explore novel artistic forms.

Music, as a cultural artifact that shapes individual identity, constitutes a significant component of teachers' pedagogical practice. The identities of children and adolescents are continuously reconstructed as they engage with the cultural matrix, which defines masculinities and femininities and influences individuals' personal choices. Concerning gender variations, songs from different eras reflect the broad spectrum of possible expressions of masculinity and femininity. From verses evoking "Amélia, who was the real woman," or the "divine and graceful, majestic statue," to contemporary funk lyrics featuring terms such as "bitches," "big-assed," "bold," and "sluggish," there is a profound exploration of human personality and gender through diverse, and occasionally unconventional, modes of expression.

Through these cultural references, teachers like the interviewee seek to interpret the behaviors of male and female students, their stereotypes, and their pluralistic perspectives on femininity and masculinity, as well as the extent to which these perspectives challenge or reinforce symbolic gender boundaries. Films, songs, and television programs significantly influence the discourse of the interviewees, who integrate artistic and cultural productions into their teaching as spaces for creative freedom.

Based on the premise that schools-particularly in early childhood education-are feminized environments, we inquired about how teachers perceive gender dynamics within their pedagogical practice. The majority of interviewees reported that female teachers often develop nurturing relationships with their students, assuming roles analogous to motherhood. The following excerpt, from an interview with a science teacher, illustrates the caring relationship female educators cultivate with their students, as she recounts her personal experiences:

[...] the girls would sit on my lap, kiss me, and apply lipstick to leave marks on my face. This occurred primarily with fifth graders, although there remained some affection from certain students in the sixth grade as well; some still displayed a degree of neediness even at that level.

Despite this, the teachers interviewed emphasized that many male educators maintain friendly relationships with their students, engaging in open dialogue and fostering positive rapport. This indicates a significant shift away from the traditional view that maternal roles are exclusively reserved for women. Moreover, being affectionate, welcoming, and demonstrating a genuine commitment to teaching are not inherently linked to gender, but rather to the teacher's passion and dedication to the profession.

Nevertheless, the interviewed teachers made it clear that many male teachers are friendly with their students, engage in conversations, and maintain positive relationships with everyone. This indicates a significant shift in the perception that the maternal role is exclusive to women. Furthermore, being caring, nurturing, and demonstrating a willingness to teach is not inherently tied to gender, but rather to one's commitment and passion for teaching.

The discourse on the absurdity of entrusting such an important mission to individuals with "underdeveloped brains" and lacking preparation was gradually replaced by other voices that began to speak of women's natural inclination for teaching, portraying it as an extension of motherhood, and justifying the withdrawal of men from the classroom in favour of more lucrative and prestigious roles. Such discourse significantly contributed to the devaluation of the role of a caring and attentive male teacher. In this context, male teachers often explain the association between female teachers and qualities such as affection and patience through the lens of maternal instinct - suggesting that women possess a special sensitivity for working with students, caring about their lives, individualized care, and exercising patience.

The History teacher tells us that female teachers tend to be more kind-hearted, whereas male teachers are generally more 'tough,' with some perceiving themselves as 'holders of the truth.' She reports that in classrooms led by male teachers, the environment tends to be quieter, which is interpreted as an indication of the teacher's effectiveness. The excerpt from her account is presented below:

The other day, I was talking to a colleague. We take course after course-methodology, techniques-and yet, we noticed something: I might not be a very good teacher. Do you know why? Because, as far as I understand, I give my students many chances to speak. I see other teachers who are different-they act like they own the truth and that's it. They take course after course, but they remain the type of teacher who just walks in, and the kids don't say a word. Meanwhile, mine talk a lot.

For most people, it's like this: if a teacher walks into the classroom and the students are silent while the teacher speaks, that teacher is considered excellent. Men tend to follow this model because they don't accept the idea of students being "in their head," maybe even feeling like the students are stepping on them.

Dussel and Caruso (2003) also highlight that teachers often feel the need to dominate their students, keeping them silent out of fear of failing to achieve their objectives. However, silence in the classroom does not determine whether a teacher is good or bad. As Dussel and Caruso state: "If pedagogy is a knowledge that helps teachers be 'good' teachers, it is necessary to begin by establishing how a 'good' teacher is defined, who defines them, and how they operate, before we consider rules, divisions, and methods of transmitting this knowledge" (2003, p. 17).

The account above illustrates how gender issues also influence conceptions of what constitutes a "good teacher." Argentine educator Alicia Fernández (1994) argues that aspects of gender specificity are often denied or caricatured within the patriarchal educational systems that persist today, to the detriment of both teachers and students. On one hand, the male teacher—often the sole man among many women—bears the responsibility of embodying the father figure: the disciplinarian, the corrector, the one expected to be tougher, thus constrained from showing tenderness and sensitivity for fear of ridicule within the school environment. Conversely, the female teacher—the vast majority—is expected to always appear smiling, submissive to demands, and to assume the role of the nurturing mother who welcomes and forgives everyone. This limits the space for difference and innovation, with the risk of being labeled violent, aggressive, or attention-seeking if she deviates from these expectations.

Another teacher remarks that when a male teacher enters the classroom wearing fashionable clothing, students perceive him differently. They become more approachable, perhaps because they recognize that the teacher is, after all, just another person: You arrive—if you arrive at the classroom, in high school—well, male, more modern, more attractive—they immediately see you in a different light. 'Teacher! How are you?' Right away, silence falls; they want you to speak. They want to listen to you. Did you understand?

The history teacher's hobby is drinking beer and socializing with family and friends, and during these gatherings, she says:

Everything comes out; there are times when we forbid ourselves from talking about school, but inevitably, we return to the topic—it almost feels like an addiction. Then we relax, change the subject, and sometimes laugh or even cry, depending on the environment and the friendships involved. [...] It's a very positive, healthy conversation where we try to learn from one another and move forward. However, there is always that small part of us that never completely forgets about the students at school.

We learn a great deal from our colleagues and sometimes even from a friend's child. Observing their behavior within their family often reflects what happens at school. Perhaps a student's problem at school is linked to difficulties within their family. In this text, the teacher attributes to her hobby the meaning of learning that supports her performance in everyday school life.

For the teachers interviewed, leisure, understood as a cultural practice, is intertwined with their teaching practice. Interestingly, however, they express some concern about incorporating these leisure activities directly into the classroom. In our interpretation, when asked about their leisure activities, they tend to transform these discussions into actions related to their professional practice. Regarding her teaching practice, the History teacher stated:

We were studying the family structure in colonial Brazil, and we discussed the struggle of homosexual couples for the right to marry. I used this example in class to express my support, emphasizing that homosexual couples also have the right to inheritance after the death of one partner. I shared examples of friends I know who passed away, leaving their partners with nothing, as the family claimed all of the deceased's possessions.

And the Science teacher said:

I teach fifth-grade students who focus on environmental studies and eighth-grade students who explore the foundational concepts of chemistry and physics, disciplines that are closely interrelated. I integrate elements of my everyday life into the classroom by utilizing information gathered from newspapers, television, and relevant advertisements. In particular, I have worked extensively with the eighth graders on the intersection of science and technology, examining recent scientific advancements and their ongoing significance. Each student was assigned a specific topic related to technology, transportation, communication, or innovation. For instance, the concept of "nanotechnology," which I encountered in a "Superinteressante" (really interesting) magazine, was unfamiliar to some students. Others researched innovations in health, such as the development of vaccines for AIDS that are currently undergoing clinical trials.

The two teachers appear to consistently integrate their daily lives into their classroom practices. The former maintains a strong focus on family and friends, while the science teacher's professional expertise extends beyond her formal role to influence the broader course of her everyday life, characterized by constant fluctuations.

Their cultural practices are not only brought into the classroom but also intersect with those of their students, whose experiences and perspectives become part of the educational content and find space within it. Concerning the issue of gender, and corroborating Louro's observations referenced earlier, the History teacher offers a confident commentary:

I'm a mother-I love being a mother-and outside of school, that's essentially who I am: a mother. I believe that being a teacher is perhaps a bit easier for women; women tend to be more sensitive. They can perceive, they have the sensitivity to notice when a student isn't feeling well in that moment. Whether we like it or not, we take on the role of mothers, because mothers never really have time; we work to help, because fathers can't do everything on their own. So, students have a great need for their mother-for their family.

And the Science teacher also looked back on her memories:

I had a teacher in second grade who, at the end of the school year, organized a small gathering during our last class and handed out chocolate candies she had made herself. I still remember the taste of those sweets. She was a very calm and clear teacher,

excellent at explaining things, and the whole class adored her. I remember her name- Dona Salete-and I will never forget it.

These teachers' statements clearly reflect what this research aimed to uncover: the maternal role is indeed present in the teaching relationship, but not as a mere replication of motherhood, nor as an indication that affection and receptiveness are inherently feminine traits. On several occasions, the interviewees highlight that many male teachers also demonstrate care and maintain close relationships with their students.

Final Considerations

In our initial proposal, we posed questions about what teachers say, aiming to explore the relationship between cultural practices and gender issues, under the premise that "every saying is a doing." Based on excerpts from the interviews, we can reaffirm this position. When asked how their daily lives relate to their teaching practice, teachers described a constant interplay between their lives outside the school and their work in the classroom- each continuously informing and intersecting with the other. Moreover, reflecting on this dynamic during the interviews led them to transform their discussions about life outside school into reflections on their teaching-effectively practicing their profession through language in the interview context.

By engaging with the interview transcripts and by addressing cultural aspects linked to gender, we sought to consider how both genders find representation within the school curriculum. In our understanding, such representation does not exist institutionally but it manifests in teaching practices.

Our guiding research question-assessing the extent to which cultural repertoires and gender influence pedagogical practices and how they motivate teachers' experiences and professional transformations-was addressed through our interview analysis. This objective is eloquently summarized by the mathematics teacher's words: "I am more for the passion."

Nevertheless, our exploration remains incomplete. Throughout the interviews and subsequent reflections on gender, we found that almost every aspect of our surroundings is connected to gender. We discovered implicit references embedded in everyday language-biblical passages, colloquialisms, and popular proverbs-that perpetuate gender norms, typically positioning the male as the default while relativizing or normalizing the female counterpart.

Considering the roles of women in creation, nurturing, and constructing and deconstructing relationships (Muraro, 1994), we investigated who teachers are, what they are capable of doing, and how they utilize cultural practices to shape pedagogical activities. Our goal was not only to understand how teachers integrate cultural contributions into their practice but also

to engage in a formative process: reflecting with teachers on their identities as women, mothers, and educators. In this regard, Clarice Lispector's questions resonate deeply: "What is happening to me?" "Why am I drawn to the question itself?" "How do I become the woman I am becoming?" "And how do we become who we are becoming?" We believe that such introspection can empower teachers to consciously incorporate cultural practices into their pedagogy. When educators recognize how they appropriate cultural artifacts, they can structure their daily work more effectively-perhaps even nurturing forms of resistance that challenge imposed identities and affirm the right to difference. These struggles are not merely individual but oppose the "governance of individualization"-where the subject can mean both someone subject to control and someone who is conscious of their own identity.

Our interviews with male and female teachers revealed certain distinctions. Female teachers generally reported closer relationships with their students, often attributing this to maternal sensitivity. All respondents agreed that women tend to form more caring bonds in the classroom. Yet, we also observed that male teachers often develop friendly, supportive relationships and bring real-world practicalities and experiences into their teaching.

In conclusion, teaching does not replicate the maternal role. As Contreras (2005), Rivera (2003), and Muraro (1994) illustrate, teaching indeed requires acceptance and availability-but these qualities are not exclusive to women. This research answered several of our original questions, but more importantly, revealed that the true outcome of our inquiry was an expansion of our understanding-and the emergence of new questions to pursue. In this light, we echo Michel Foucault, who never posited a final destination or absolute fulfillment of the subject. Rather, he invites us to continually problematize the mechanisms of subject formation, which are always intertwined with power relations and strategies of resistance.

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School, Citizenship and Gender

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Abstract

Schools and classrooms bring together individuals with diverse life histories, each bearing distinct knowledge, interests and values. The teacher's role is to foster knowledge production within this complex network of relations, always partial and provisional. In this context gender issues emerge the focus of this chapter. Identities and differences are often represented in schools in crystallized, naturalized forms that legitimate prejudice. Power/knowledge mechanisms have not only constructed gender, but they have also produced transgressions of the "ideal" models. Regimes of truth circumscribe discourse about the non-woman, the non-man, and implicitly deny citizenship. Drawing on Camargo, Certeau, Foucault, Larrosa, Louro, Ortega, among others, this article reflects on ways everyday school life might be reinvented through what children and educators do and say, enacting alternative ways of being women and men, and inhabiting schools beyond the spaces instituted by disciplinary power. If social meanings in any field, including gender and sexuality, are discursively produced, then new discourses, by being repeated, may open up new ways of problematizing what has already been said.

Keywords

Gender; Identities; School

Introduction

Citizenship has recently become the keyword across all discourses, from political to educational. The intensity of its usage is proportional to the difficulty of human coexistence. Men and women, both globally and in Brazil, have not succeeded in creating a political and

social ethic capable of keeping pace with progress in other fields. Human reason has propelled science to unimaginable levels, and technological sophistication reaches various areas, from genetics to cosmetology. Yet most ethnic, religious, sexual, territorial, and economic conflicts that plague the world remain unresolved.

Human relations continue to be marked by anti-citizenship, by contestation, and by struggles for power and meaning. There is no need to list here the numerous conflicts that permeate our immediate daily lives and the globalized world that reaches us instantaneously through the media. It is evident that there is a collapse of old certainties and a crisis in identities that were once socially instituted and accepted.

These issues permeate schools, one of the grounds of conflict among social groups, and intersect with the complex problem of citizenship. In the Brazilian educational context, this term has already become a prosaism, repeated countless times in official documents (such as the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education – LDB, Brazil, 1996; National Curriculum Parameters – PCNs, Brazil, 1997), in teachers' discourse across all levels, and in the written records of their educational functions (teaching plans, performance evaluations, reports). Its use has become so common that every issue of citizenship is taking the risk of being settled, resolved, complete, as something transcendent, an absolute truth, inherent to the act of educating, desired by all, and an end in itself.

The sense of belonging mentioned in the PCNs is reiterated in the National Common Curricular Base – BNCC (Brazil, 2018), when addressing citizenship. The section on Elementary Education emphasizes the importance of valuing “children’s experiences within their family, social, and cultural contexts, their memories, their sense of belonging to a group (...)” (p. 58). The History volume for Elementary Education highlights connections with the community in terms of recovering and recording memories; the responsibilities and roles performed by diverse individuals; lived spaces and experiences; and the inclusion and exclusion of distinct groups. The word *community* is exhaustively repeated in the skills to be developed from the 1st through the 5th grade.

How, then, can citizenship be related to education and gender, the focus of this study? To these terms, we add the word *culture*, which is fundamental to this discussion. What conceptions of culture, citizenship, and education circulate in everyday school life? How were they constituted?

We begin with the concept of culture as a field of struggle among different social groups for power and meaning (Silva, 2000, p. 32). All groups seek representation: men and women; white, Black, and Indigenous people; children and adults; the poor and the wealthy; employers and employees; the religious and the atheist; professionals from the most diverse areas, just to mention a few.

Schools and classrooms bring together individuals with diverse life histories, each shaped by distinct knowledge, interests and values. In their personal historical trajectories, every individual who inhabits the school environment constructs their own meanings. The classroom is grounded in diversity, and the role of the teacher is to foster the production of knowledge within this complex network of social relations. All knowledge generated therein constitutes a partial and provisional approximation of the broad dimension of human life in its full complexity.

The opportunity to analyze deeply these issues arose within the investigative context provided by the Specialization Course in Educational Management, promoted by the University of Campinas (Unicamp), Brazil, in 2005. The course involved principals, vice principals, and supervisors from public schools in the state of São Paulo, at the request of the State Department of Education, with approximately 6,000 participants. Two centers for the course were established: one in São Paulo, the state capital, and the other in Campinas, encompassing administrators from cities in the interior.

The analyses presented in this article are based on work conducted in Campinas, where I participated as an academic member of the course within a team of ten professors. The section I taught was *Everyday School Life*, whose syllabus was guided by the notion of citizenship understood as a cultural construction produced in any context involving social relations and, as such, immersed in the spaces, times, routines, and conflicts of school life.

The collective effort of coordinators, instructors, and teaching assistants was directed toward fostering reflections on the emergences of this daily life: its sounds, images, and languages, interwoven with meanings and symbolisms, whether explicit or implicit, particularly in relation to issues of sexuality, gender relations, and violence in schools.

For us, the professors of the section, the task was to create opportunities for joint reflection, integrating, in the in-person setting, discussions from online forums and theoretical support materials provided through the assigned bibliography. These discussions revolved around films watched by the school administrators (*Antonia's Line*; *Butterfly's Tongue*; *Brainstorm*; *Billy Elliot*; *Boys Don't Cry*; *Ma Vie en Rose*; *Not One Less*; and *Mona Lisa Smile*); the results of a school-based survey on the music most frequently listened to by students; and emblematic images (both historical and contemporary) of everyday school life.

The proposal was to delimit the investigation to a diverse universe of children and adolescents between 8 and 14 years old, with varied life histories and socioeconomic and cultural contexts, but all situated within the educational reality inferred from debates with school administrators during the course and from the written reports they submitted at its conclusion. These reports were to narrate an event that had occurred in the school involving a situation of violence related to any of the analyzed aspects. The discussion of violence

included issues of gender and sexuality as well as discourses on health, adolescence, and drugs.

Administrators reported (many in a tone of lament) the most diverse forms of explicit or veiled violence occurring in their schools, involving teachers along with children, adolescents, and families. Cases ranged from physical aggression and threats within and around the school to situations of mutual disrespect among teachers, students, and families in different contexts; conflicts between parents and the school, and between parents and adolescents mediated by school administration. Reports also included prejudice and discrimination related to race, physical disabilities, and learning difficulties, among others. Out of 500 reports, 84 were selected as most directly related to conceptions, experiences, and events involving gender and sexuality.

What was the purpose of this analysis? To provide ready-made answers to the problems of everyday school life? Certainly not since such answers do not exist. The aim was to contribute to broadening the debate. Glimpsing, through administrators' reports, their own representations, as well as those of students and their families, on the subject at hand, without proposing "absolute truths" about any aspect analyzed. With the data collected, it was possible to cross-analyze approaches in which educators, along with children and adolescents, engaged in a process that, in Fisher's words (2002, p. 59), constituted "[...] an invitation to the work of thinking one's own history, to liberate thought from what it silently thinks, and to enable it to think differently."

When administrators created opportunities for children and adolescents to speak, for example, about their favorite music, they were allowing them to express who they are and also who they would like to be and what they would like to do, if given the chance. The course thus invoked Hannah Arendt's conviction (2000, p. 191) that, even amid discourses that shape us, "each human being is unique, such that with each birth something singularly new comes into the world."

In this sense, the discursive and cultural analyses converged, as the investigation was immersed in a plurality of voices and contexts that did not always possess the same legitimacy, security, or power to be heard and acknowledged. Michel Foucault reminds us (apud Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1995, p. 256): "My opinion is that not everything is bad, but everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. "[...] The ethical-political choice we have to make every day is to determine which is the main danger."

It is within this context that issues related to gender, which will be analyzed in the following section, are situated.

Gender and Teaching Practice

Identities and differences are represented in schools in a crystallized manner, encompassing everyone within predetermined categories regarding social, economic, or gender conditions. Schools assert with certainty who boys and girls are, as well as the poor and the wealthy, and how they should behave. In doing so, they naturalize and legitimize differences and prejudices. The statement of one teacher illustrates this point:

Boys are more restless than girls, more aggressive. A class with a lot of boys is always more difficult. Boys from higher social classes are very individualistic, very selfish. Those from lower social classes have a stronger sense of community spirit.

On this subject, Guacira Lopes Louro (1999, p. 58) observes: *“The school delimits spaces. By employing symbols and codes, it affirms what each person can (or cannot) do; it separates and institutes. It informs the ‘place’ of the small and the large, of boys and girls.”* The author shows how distinctions between boys and girls are treated with such deeply ingrained naturalness that they end up institutionalizing practices that favor boys over girls. These practices then come to be considered “natural” to being a boy, inscribed “in the order of things.”

The old stereotypes regarding the female and male condition persist, while alongside them new accounts emerge concerning the most recent victims of discrimination: homosexuals. In reports from school administrators (Andrade, 2017, p. 28), the possibilities for combinations in this field remain confined to the traditionally accepted formula whereby the materiality of male sex (people born with male sexual organs) naturally determines gender identity (as masculine), as well as heterosexual orientation or the other way around:

SEX: MALE + GENDER: MALE + ORIENTATION: HETEROSEXUAL + IDENTITY: HETEROSEXUAL MAN.

OR

SEX: FEMALE + GENDER: FEMALE + ORIENTATION: HETEROSEXUAL + IDENTITY: HETEROSEXUAL WOMAN.

Schools have not recognized that identities do not fit into such formulas and that new processes of subjectivation have made possible a diversity of gender and sexual orientation combinations. Civilizing processes and mechanisms of power and knowledge have historically constituted gender, while, in parallel, transgressions of the so-called ideal models of gender and sexuality have also emerged within this process. Regimes of truth have produced girls and boys while circumscribing discourse about the non-woman, the non-man, and the implicit denial of citizenship in that.

The civilizing process of men and women has been constructed in diverse and often opposing ways. From where did the “truths” about feminine or masculine “nature,” their bodies, their sexuality, their social roles, and their identities originate? They emerged from millennial

sayings and writings that “instituted” the condition of being a man or a woman through a civilizing process involving philosophical, artistic, and religious discourses. Consider some examples (Andrade, 2017, pp. 40-41):

- “There are no women who are white and pure.”
— Sylvio de Vasconcelos
- “Prostitute, goddess, great lady, lover; woman transmits or preserves, but does not create, the values and energies entrusted to her by nature or society.”
— Octavio Paz

How could such discourse have convinced women and men for so long? The mischievous might ask: “*Who has shaped a woman’s mind more than her hairdresser?*” (The malicious would ask). Who defines the models, the possible combinations, the acceptable identities? The church, the family, the media, society, and the school. Here, we highlight the school in particular. How, within schools, do cultural objects and normative discourses intersect to constitute these subjects?

Since colonial Brazil, a civilizing process has been intertwined with political, medical, and religious discourses that prescribed the injunctions of “being a woman,” and, in parallel, of “being a man.” A genealogy of knowledge and power reveals how women were produced as a specific gender and sexuality in relation to the masculine. The connections between knowledge and power, embedded in discursive processes, have been “telling” us what it means to be a woman or a man while simultaneously establishing the “rules of delimitation” for their roles and functions—their very “conditions of existence.”

On questions of gender, symbolic marking has ascribed to women and men certain characteristics that, when left unchallenged, become institutionalized as truths. These constructions are unreflective and pre-judge the qualities women and men are expected to possess. These stereotypes vary according to the culture in which they are constructed and are transmitted and accepted by the social group through repetition in the socialization process exercised through language.

From an early age, girls are taught what is permitted and what is forbidden to them as women. Similarly, boys are instructed about their masculinity. These notions of femininity and masculinity include clothing, toys, and even attitudes and behaviors deemed appropriate to their sex. If we take recreation as an example, we see that boys are allowed to display aggressiveness in games, as this is considered inherent to being a boy, whereas girls are expected to show docility, as is considered proper to being a girl. Boys are free to play as Indigenous warriors, thieves, bandits, heroes, fierce tigers, or to play soccer, while girls are expected to engage in games as housewives, hairdressers, teachers, or nurses.

With the aim of experimenting with perspectives of (de)construction and (re)construction of these gender identities, proposed in the *Everyday School Life* part of the course offered in Campinas in 2005 for education administrators in the state of São Paulo, several art-related activities were developed, including film discussions, song interpretation, and the contextualization of images addressing the theme. All these activities enabled administrators to develop new perspectives on the gender relations historically constructed in Brazil and on the ways, they were represented in the reports produced as part of the course (some of these accounts are cited in this text).

There was also the production of embroidery by male and female administrators, intended to revisit the stereotype of skills considered exclusive to women, thereby opening up stimulating discussions about the supposed exclusivity of women's "vocation" for teaching. In the embroidery sessions, held during the last course meeting, administrators represented pieces of burlap fabric, (using wool and large needles) symbols of educational functions, school violence, and gendered educational roles, in short, a synthesis of the themes addressed. To our surprise, it was the men (principals, supervisors, and school counselors) who eagerly competed with the women educators for their turn to stitch.

These gender stereotypes not only attempt to justify inequalities between men and women but also institutionalize them within schools, in the very process of constituting sexual and gender identities. This institutionalization:

[...] not only reproduces but also produces cultural and meaning-making practices, within the continuous and multiple interplay of knowledge/power in which it is embedded. In this context, the school may assume a differentiated role, not merely as a reproducer, but as a generator of diverse practices and meanings, new cultural identities, and new power relations. This perspective, invoking Foucault, is wary of any universalizing knowledge that reduces an institution or a human need to formulas that claim to provide definitive, ready-made answers for any of these needs (Andrade, 2003, p. 62).

In schools, this process takes on immense proportions due to the proximity and diversity of performers, the extended time of coexistence, and the interplay of knowledge and power involved. From the activities developed in the School Administrators' Course, numerous examples of violence emerged, some of which we present below by way of illustration.

Gender-based Violence in Schools and Possible Solutions

Schools present an endless array of examples of gender-based violence. Below, we summarize some of them (selected for their thematic diversity, although many were repeated, especially those referring to homosexuality), documented in research conducted from the results of the School Administrators' Course offered at UNICAMP on Everyday

School Life (Andrade, 2009, pp. 93–109). These are teachers' accounts of gender-based violence committed by students, parents, and even teachers and school administrators, and they are highly illustrative. Such violence is usually symbolic, rarely escalating into physical aggression. However, it can be just as, if not more, harmful, if we pay attention to what is implied between the lines of each testimony:

- “For me, ma’am, being a man means being macho, being strong, not being afraid of anything.” (Fabrício, 11 years old)
- “For me, ma’am... I don’t really know... being a woman means taking care of yourself, looking good, getting married, and having children.” (Jéssica, 10 years old)
- When asked if he would dance at the June festival, the boy replied: “What? Ma’am, are you kidding me? I’m a macho man. Do you think I’m gay?”
- “Oh God, ma’am, if I told my dad I wanted to be a ballet dancer, he’d beat me to death. And if he ever saw me in one of those little outfits...”
- A teenage girl said that to be accepted by the boys, she had sex with all of them since the age of 12, but even so, she was deeply unhappy.
- Everyone knew André was “queer”, but they insisted he didn’t need to exaggerate his “sissy” behavior and high-pitched voice. The teacher recommended a speech therapist, and his father agreed to pay—while also beating him at home.
- Lucas, a boy who liked other boys, was advised by his teacher to see a psychologist to “fix” his sexual behavior.
- Students wrote “kiss me” on slips of paper and stuck them on the backs of classmates they wanted to “mess with.” If the student refused, another classmate held them down so the task could be carried out. Whoever kissed the most was labeled the “stud”, dominated the playground, and was feared and respected. Those who refused were called “fags,” and the girls who complied were labeled “sluts.”
- “I’m pregnant and I’ve thought about suicide, abortion, I don’t know... because of the nasty comments: Did you see who got pregnant? No surprise there, she was always spreading her legs for anyone...”
- When confronted with a homosexual student, some teachers commented: “Cut your hair, stop painting your nails. That’s why you get beaten up.”
- An 18-year-old student reported that, once his classmates discovered he was a virgin, they began making malicious remarks. He felt betrayed and demanded action. If nothing was done, he threatened to go to the police.

- Gino, a 6-year-old boy, did not like playing wrestling, running, or tag. Teachers were outraged when his mother bought him Powerpuff Girls stickers and let him take them to school on toy day.
- Lucas, who was constantly called “fag” by his classmates, began spending more time with the girls, who treated him kindly, but he had recently shown a significant decline in academic performance.
- A female student was described by teachers as difficult, aggressive, and undisciplined. She responded violently to peers’ remarks linking her behavior to that of her mother, who allegedly “received” men. Her father shaved her head, and she wore a cap at school to hide the punishment.
- [...] An employee discreetly brought me a student’s enrollment form and whispered that “Adriano was Adriana.” At that moment, a young woman entered the office and presented me with Law No. 10.948/2001, which establishes penalties for discriminatory practices based on sexual orientation. [...]
- One day Paula arrived at the principal’s office in tears, saying she could not use the boys’ restroom because they tried to take advantage of her, nor the girls’ restroom because of her condition. “Why does she dress so provocatively? No wonder this happened!”
- The main issue with João/Monique was bathroom use: she wanted to use the girls’ restroom rather than the boys’, where she was assaulted by male students who felt “threatened” by her presence.
- In the teachers’ lounge, the topic of conversation was a student labeled a “dyke”. “Hey, did you see that seventh-grade student? She’s a lesbian! They should put her as a striker on the school soccer team. If she were my daughter, I’d beat her until she stopped this nonsense.”

And what, we might ask, is the role of schools today in this context? From the perspective of recent Cultural Studies and the authors cited in this article, the role of schools would be to:

- Consider gender identity as being far more connected to the experience of feeling oneself to be a man and/or a woman than to any supposedly determinative genetic factor—not as an isolated element, but as part of a vast array of components within a cultural construct.

The history of our education has not embraced multiplicity. Reason was imposed as dominant over sensitivity, spirit over body. To unveil these dichotomies and mechanisms of manipulation is an audacious task for educators, as they pursue becoming, strive to understand themselves and children, and continually reorganize

the educational process with a view toward fostering singularities (Camargo, 1999, p. 91).

- Giving voice to men and women and deconstruct certainties about women's supposed inferiority or submission and men's presumed strength or dominance, beliefs that harm everyone and the relationship between genders. This includes dismantling the discourse that women are more suited to teaching because of their "innate" capacity for caring.
- Listening to men and women and work with them to deconstruct many false "truths" about gender identities, as illustrated by this teacher's statement:

This must be understood and respected in this sexist society that imposes the "blue and pink culture" on boys and girls, constructing the strong, tough man "who does not cry," who is pressured from an early age in terms of sexual performance. Enough! We must put an end to this! It is indeed necessary to problematize daily school life and interpret the challenges lived within it. (Andrade, 2009, p. 1009)

- Listening to women and men and ensure that girls (and boys) are not treated as fixed, terminal identities, but that the histories of women and men remain always in construction.
- Viewing childhood and adolescence as "the other," which escapes any claim to uniformity or generalization. Avoid the arrogance of attempting to decipher them, impose goals, or define existential priorities. Always consider them as beings who escape every form of explanation, who cannot be contained by epistemological boundaries, and who are always heterogeneous in their enigmatic presence (Andrade, 2003, p. 60).

In this sense, it is necessary to question the practices of schools that claim to promote a so-called civic education and to envision less restrictive possibilities, invoking Francisco Ortega's proposal to introduce movement and imagination into deteriorated and rigid social relations (Ortega, 1999, p. 172).

This movement involves the care of the self, which Ortega found in Michel Foucault (1999). From this care of the self-derives a concern for others, indispensable to one's relationship with oneself. Existence does not unfold in solitude. The care of the self requires care for the other and is intertwined with the feeling of belonging to a group:

Foucault does not claim in his analysis a self-constitution in isolation that excludes any relationship with others. For him, the other is always present at the origin of the aesthetic constitution of the self, in the figure of the master, guide, teacher, spiritual director, or friend. (Ortega, 1999, p. 133)

The *self-care*, which necessarily involves *the care of the others*, creates in schools the possibility of denying the sacrality of the norms and statutes that govern them, revisiting laws and rules of coexistence so that they do not turn against the subject but rather in their favor. The perspective is to continually reexamine these models, attempting to break the repetitive circularity of the relations that constituted them, as well as those that shaped other subjects involved.

This practice is both personal and social, involving a conduct that assumes “the form of a permanent filtering of representations: examining them, controlling them, sorting them (...) ‘distinguishing’ them from one another, and thereby avoiding the acceptance of the ‘first one that appears’” (Foucault, 1999, pp. 67–68). The *self-care* sets individuals the task of putting themselves to the test, of examining their own truths about who they are, what they do with themselves, and what they do with others. This care fosters continuous reflection on the historical and cultural contexts that have shaped social relations, making change possible. From this perspective, opportunities emerge for teachers to view themselves and their students from new angles as complex human beings who cannot be reduced to a single gender, race, social class, nationality, age group, and so forth.

The possibility of this happening in schools is meaningfully illustrated by Jorge Larrosa when he speaks of the lesson: “(...) the experience of reading, when it is involved with teaching and learning, implies a relationship of each person with themselves and with others,” and “(...) how a lesson can be a true reading, a true learning experience in friendship and in freedom.” Furthermore, in such a relationship of friendship, it is not the role of the teacher “to assign what must be read,” but rather “to give to read what must be: read.” (Larrosa, 1999, p. 140)

In a classroom relationship grounded in friendship, it is not the teacher’s role to impose their own truths about citizenship, identity, and difference, but to bring together all readers around the texts already produced on these concepts. In engaging in these texts, the reader should not be limited to what they say but should prioritize what they give us to say.

School relationships in elementary education are guided by a polarized system. On one side, there is the adult teacher, constituted by truths about what it means to be an adult and a teacher; on the other side, the child student, constituted by the certainties of the teacher and the school about what it means to be a student and a child. With *philia* (friendship inspired by the perspective of the aesthetics of existence), the field of identities expands, escaping predetermined boundaries and encouraging new ways for those involved to see themselves, express themselves, narrate themselves, and judge themselves, without being reduced to mere results of others’ narratives, statements, and judgments. This makes it possible not to see oneself as a finished, defined, terminal identity, but as someone in the process of becoming, both in relation to oneself and in relation to the other.

It is this form of beauty present in human relations that creates a new ethics of friendship, one that can open in schools a space to be filled with new childhoods, new adolescences, new educational identities, allowing for new educational relationships that transgress institutionalized practices, routines, and school schedules.

At some point, we were what a certain form of education made us. And we will be, at every moment of our lives, what we make of the education we practice and what the circles of seekers of knowledge with whom we engage are continuously creating in us and doing with us. (Brandão, 2000, p. 451)

Modifying the conventional forms of so-called civic education requires a historical analysis of the practices that contributed to the formation of subject(s): men, women, homosexuals, Black people, white people, Indigenous people, adults, children, adolescents, the elderly, mothers, fathers, teachers, students, “normal” individuals, Brazilians, people from Minas Gerais, without, however, reducing them to these categories. The proposal is also to analyze the meanings of homeland, democracy, citizenship, rights, and duties. It is to always ask: *where, when, and by whom were they instituted, and in whose interest?*

As educators, we can thus escape the certainties about civic education that we have been practicing and be encouraged to ask ourselves who we are as teachers and what we do for ourselves and for our students in this field. This exercise makes it possible to escape certainties about sexuality, nationality, gender, race, economic status, and age, broadening the possibilities of civic construction.

We can also, perhaps, collectively build new practices of meaning about what it is to be a man, a woman, a child, a student, a teacher, white, Black, rich, or poor, and thereby promote new possibilities for civic relations constructed from within the school.

Final Considerations

The reflections in this article sought to demonstrate that there are possibilities for reinventing everyday school life through the voices of children (girls and boys) and also of educators who establish other ways of being women and men and of being in school beyond the spaces instituted by disciplinary power. If social meanings in any field, including that of gender and sexuality, are produced discursively, then this truthful discourse, through repetition, may establish new ways of problematizing what has already been said on the subject.

This analysis began with the assumption that girls and boys internalize the civilizational principles that shape notions of citizenship through their school experience. It was found that it is still largely there that they first encounter historical notions of citizenship, as well as religious and moralizing models concerning the roles of men and women in social practices. The study examined how these models continue to govern relationships, stigmatizing rules,

and identity positions. It called upon the possibility of breaking certain certainties and of seeing girls and boys as the *"other: the one who, far beyond any attempt at capture, unsettles the security of our knowledge, questions the power of our practices, and opens a void into which collapses the well-constructed edifice of our institutions of reception."* (Larrosa, 1999a, p. 69)

Creative accommodation in the field of gender and sexuality relations would not imply a simple equality of rights already socially validated, but rather the refusal of already institutionalized forms of relationships and subjectivation. The notion of friendship (*philia*) implied therein transcends the individual limits of an aesthetics of existence and situates itself within a broader dimension, one that considers both individual and collective needs and values their interaction.

Several emergent issues arising in and from the daily life of schools were presented, described through the voices of teachers reporting the words of children themselves, or of other teachers, administrators, or parents—sometimes confirming what had already been said and crystallized in relationships, at other times introducing the possibility of new ways of speaking and acting, new aesthetic possibilities for reinventing school routines and rituals.

This reflection was inspired by the words of Michel de Certeau (2008) on everyday life, when he describes it as a space of investment in imagination, in the unexpected, in transgression, in symbolic balances, and in more or less temporary agreements. These investments are initiated by teachers, ordinary girls and boys, the wise and the mad, who, in countless ways, recreate the spaces and experiences that take place within them.

The reflection undertaken here was based on the assumption that the aesthetic exercise of the craft of questioning can infiltrate the microphysical fissures of power relations embedded in daily life: *"quasi-microbial operations that proliferate at the heart of technocratic structures and alter their functioning through a multiplicity of 'tactics' articulated upon the 'details' of everyday life."* (Certeau, 2008, p. 41). However much the microphysics of power privileges the apparatus of disciplinary production, and even though, in education, it operates through efficient technologies that institute subjects, there remain countless ways to reinvent everyday life through questions and the experiences they engender.

The question this article sought to address was also inspired by Michel de Certeau. If it is true that the network of *"surveillance"* extends everywhere and becomes increasingly precise, it is even more urgent to discover how an entire society is not reduced to it: what everyday procedures engage with regulatory mechanisms without conforming to them? It was boldly suggested—while acknowledging the complexity of both the subject and the School itself—that new *"ways of doing"* and *"ways of speaking"* be explored, grounded in the aesthetics of existence and in friendship (*philia*).

May this boldness be forgiven, but may it also find resonance among educators—that is our hope.

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Artisanal Intelligence as a Contribution to Design Pedagogy

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Abstract

Design schools today face a crisis of relevance: many still maintain paradigms rooted in the twentieth century and struggle to enact meaningful change amid urgent political, social, and environmental challenges. The current educational model has limitations in training autonomous, critical, and socially responsible professionals, which requires a broad restructuring that integrates theory and practice, thus valuing human, ethical, and communication skills. This article proposes the concept of Artisanal Intelligence as a paradigm to address the disconnection between theoretical and practical knowledge, as well as the predominance of a market-driven approach to design education. This proposal offers an open system of productive tensions that reconnects tradition and innovation, incorporates techniques such as regenerative practice, and recognizes artisanal production as a form of resistance, while simultaneously revaluing materiality, stimulating situated cognition, and celebrating local knowledge. By embracing these multiple dimensions, Artisanal Intelligence transcends mere technique transfer to cultivate autonomy and resistance, provoking profound engagement with direct experience as well as sensory involvement and contextual

understanding. This approach has the capacity to foster the development of designers equipped to navigate contemporary complexities, balancing technical excellence, cultural awareness, and social responsibility.

Keywords

Design Education; Critical Pedagogy; Decoloniality; Embodied Knowledge; Regenerative Design

Introduction

Technical-artistic education has been critically examined since the Industrial Revolution, when Ruskin, J. (2007) and Morris, W. (2001), within the Arts and Crafts movement, rejected the industrial educational model and advocated for pedagogies centered on manual work. In 1914, the Deutscher Werkbund (German Association of Crafts) brought together Henry van de Velde and Hermann Muthesius in Cologne to debate the tension between the designer's creative autonomy and mass functionalism—a confrontation that inspired the creation of Gropius' Bauhaus in 1919, whose curriculum integrated art, craft, and industry in the name of innovation and large-scale production (Souza, et al., 2009).

At the Ulm School, Maldonado (2012) reinforced this approach by adding technical rigor and grounding design activity in scientific methods, advocating for a more methodical "industrial culture." Subsequently, Archer (1968) and Cross (2006) systematized the design process as a research discipline. Papanek (2014) positions himself in favor of ethically committed design and criticizes design's deviation from its original purpose of serving human and ecological needs.

More recently, Bonsiepe et al. (2022), Manzini (2015), and Krippendorff (2006) have analyzed transformations in design education within globalized, technological, and culturally diverse contexts.

A Brief Portrait of Design Education

The book "Designing design education: White book on the future of design education," which synthesizes five years of research with 250 teachers, students, and professionals from 25 countries across four continents, offers a comprehensive portrait of the field. The study shows there is no single narrative: design education today presents itself as a territory marked by contrasts, tensions, and multiple visions. For the authors, one of the most urgent problems is the traditional curricular format—based on isolated disciplines—which proves

incapable of articulating the multiple dimensions of a design project: technical skill, aesthetics, social relevance, political and legal implications, as well as economic viability and cultural meaning. This segmentation makes content easily manageable in academia but does not prepare students for the integrative reality of professional practice (Spitz, 2021).

Bonsiepe (2013) identifies an "acceleration of the half-life period of design study programs," where technological and social transformations surpass educational adaptation capacity. This lag generates a paradox: curricula based on rapidly obsolete knowledge, while essential competencies for contemporary practice remain absent from education. Such acceleration is not neutral but responds to demands from globalized markets that require professionals capable of constantly producing novelties that feed the cycles of programmed obsolescence characteristic of late capitalism. In parallel, Laranjo (2019) denounces that design universities do not challenge political, social, cultural, and environmental phenomena with the required urgency. Mazé (2019) adds: design today acts powerfully in society, but traditional education still rests on Industrial Era logic, postponing crucial debates about "for whom" and "with whom" one designs, including power, class, ethnicity, globality, and gender.

The inability of design schools to reposition manifests in student subordination, which "makes authentic communication impossible" instead of genuine responses to social needs (Laranjo, 2019). For him, radical transformation requires abandoning the universal and oppressive models that shaped design "principles" in the twentieth century. As Freire (1987) observes, "banking education" perpetuates structures of domination that, by forming uncritical subjects, reproduce systems of oppression without questioning them. Weil and Mayfield (2020) reinforce that competencies such as systemic thinking, interdisciplinary collaboration, and social responsibility are rarely developed in courses, while Kermik (2012), Meyer and Norman (2020) highlight the need for designers capable of confronting global "wicked problems" such as climate change and inequalities.

Frayling (2012) identifies an epistemological hierarchy that devalues know-how in favor of formal knowledge, resulting in generic curricula that prioritize "design thinking" to the detriment of specific technical and cultural foundations.

Bonsiepe et al. (2022) and Alvelos, Chatterjee and Almeida (2021) point to the importance of promoting material regeneration, bringing design education closer to specific cultural contexts and local economies, while transforming design schools into living laboratories where theory and practice merge. Nimkulrat and Groth (2025) reinforce the importance of embodied knowledge, typical of craftsmanship, as a basis for cultivating tactile sensitivity and sustainable practices.

Critical analysis of the literature points to fundamental gaps for transforming design education. Laranjo (2019) argues there is a clear need for profound and substantial change,

as transformation will never be radical when adopting the universal and oppressive models that shaped design "principles" during the twentieth century. These are as follows:

Gaps identified in design education

Production of Specialists versus Critical Thinkers

Design education persists in compartmentalizing knowledge—sealed modules that rarely dialogue with each other—while the real world demands a holistic vision. This practice forms specialists efficient in pre-established routines but incapable of questioning the power structures that sustain them. In contrast, design should be a "value-based practice with great social responsibility," offering a space for autonomous and expanded ethical investigation (Spitz, 2021). According to Bonsiepe (2013), project-based learning should be the "dominant main axis of designer professional education." By prioritizing co-authorship and independent research, this approach prepares designers as critical leaders and agents of change, not mere executors of external demands.

Epistemic Homogenization

Noel (2020) proposes a pluriversal perspective to break Eurocentric hegemony in design curricula, with the capacity to stimulate the inclusion of diverse and contextualized narratives. Papanek (2014) contests commercial design for its disconnection from genuine human needs and appeals for pedagogy centered on social responsibility and sustainability. Walker (2014), in defending "designing sustainability," shows that true innovation requires radical transformations in productive processes. However, most current design courses remain tied to efficiency and market appeal, thus producing professionals who reinforce rather than challenge socio-environmentally unsustainable systems. Bonsiepe (2013) criticizes this "hegemonic discourse" that subjugates design's aspiration for social impact to a sterile standard, neglecting its critical and emancipatory potential.

Territorial Disconnection

The Anti-Amnesia project, developed by Alvelos, Barreto et al. (2018-2020), reveals how design schools' distancing from heritage and local realities erodes design's cultural value, reducing it to mere decontextualized merchandise. This "semantic reduction of 'value'" privileges monetary gains over other dimensions intrinsic to craftsmanship and material culture. Active pedagogy, immersed in local contexts, reconnects students to intergenerational traditions and thus transforms educational institutions into living laboratories focused on research and co-production of solutions that respect local knowledge and ecologies (Pereira, Alvelos, & Chatterjee, 2020).

Shiva (2001) warns of epistemological biopiracy, which appropriates traditional knowledge without recognition or benefit to originating communities. Appadurai (2008) reinforces the

problem of territorial disconnection by showing that in globalized markets, objects lose connections to territory, converting them into mere consumption symbols.

Passive Pedagogy

Traditional and hierarchical pedagogy exercises the "asphyxiation of individual initiative" (Tschimmel, 2010), when teachers assume an active attitude and students a passive attitude in knowledge transmission. Freire (1987) describes this model as oppressive because it "stimulates naivety" instead of criticality; in response, he proposes "problem-posing education," a dialogical practice in which educators and learners learn mutually, thus promoting autonomy and critical thinking. Laranjo (2019) reinforces the urgency of "radical pedagogies" that transform students into co-authors of their learning. Design education should thus assume the format of a collaborative learning laboratory, where teachers act more as "travel companions than guides" (Tschimmel, 2010), thus stimulating reflection, dialogue, and balance between reasoning and intuition, preparing professionals for autonomous and sustainable trajectories.

Thinking with Hands: Embodied Knowledge

The dichotomy between conception and execution has underestimated the epistemological value of manual practice, relegating workshops to secondary spaces while approaching design as an abstract cognitive process. Nimkulrat and Groth (2025) warn that the increasing replacement of physical workshops with digital tools does not help students obtain essential knowledge about material properties, attributes, and constructions necessary for realistic mental visualizations. Reay et al. (2014) reinforce this warning by documenting the erosion of manual skills in the face of the primacy of 3D modeling and accelerated manufacturing.

Spitz (2021) reminds us that design is not reduced to "thinking like a designer," nor to mere mental exercises: "Manual handling promotes understanding ('thinking with hands')"; it unites reflection and pragmatism in the same gesture. This harmony of questioning and foundation, of theory and practice, confirms that know-how is not ornamental but an indispensable substrate for meaningful innovation. Reintegrating the workshop into the curriculum is therefore restoring dialogue between body and mind and recognizing craft's material intelligence as the driving force of design thinking.

Dominant Technical Rationality

The predominance of efficiency and predictability in design education generally imposes technical reason that favors the application of scientific methods but fails when facing uncertain and unique problems. Schön (1983) criticizes this "technical rationality" by defending reflection-in-action—improvisation and reflective experimentation in the very act of making—as a vital element for confronting unforeseen situations.

Buchanan (1992) expands this vision by classifying design as a "wicked problems" discipline, whose resolution requires creativity and continuous reflection, not uncritical application of

pre-established scripts. In Portugal, Raposo (2021), in mapping "narrow-band education," in which highly specialized curricula lose adaptability to rapid technological mutations, recommends "broad-band" training that combines scientific foundation and transversal skills—creativity, communication, and teamwork.

Tschimmel (2015) states that designer education should encourage "in alternation, rational and emotional thinking, methodical and intuitive procedures, divergent and convergent thinking, as well as acquisition of new knowledge and a creative way of dealing with the unknown," contributing to preparing professionals capable of acting in fluid contexts where technique is constantly renewed according to environmental, social, and technological demands.

Disconnected Innovation and Emerging Technologies

Innovation, often treated as radical rupture, disregards the richness of local knowledge, resulting in projects disconnected from traditions and identities. Krucken (2009) argues that valuing territorial products is an important foundation for genuinely contextual innovations capable of strengthening regional economies and preserving cultural heritage.

Heimer, Andreassen and Haugen (2017) see in craftsmanship the opportunity to develop practical competencies and material understanding essential for innovating in ways consistent with human and ecological systems. Krippendorff (2006) highlights in studies on design and material culture that university curricula should include ethnographic case studies of local artisan communities while simultaneously promoting living laboratories that make universities meeting points between teachers, students, and regional artisans.

Tschimmel (2015) emphasizes that in higher design education, specialized mastery and transversal knowledge that allows surprising configurative combinations is fundamental for developing a truly creative and innovative designer. The author also highlights that creativity does not arise from nothing; the "new" only appears based on or in comparison with the "old." Neil Gershenfeld (2005) adds that instead of obsolescence, emerging technologies can be supported by artisanal knowledge as a dynamic foundation for more humane and user-controlled personal manufacturing, articulating tradition and vanguard to provide resilient design ecosystems.

Artisanal Intelligence: Concept and Foundation

From a critical interdisciplinary review, we developed a model that recognizes the systemic complexity of artisanal making. Our analysis reveals how craftsmanship operates simultaneously as an embodied practice that unifies mind and body; a knowledge system transmitted between generations; a cultural vehicle of resistance and identity; an ethical position regarding accelerated consumption; an economic mode alternative to industrial

logics; a living historical heritage; a sustainable approach to material interaction; a therapeutic process of well-being; a field of technical innovation; and an integrative educational paradigm between knowing and making.

Artisanal Intelligence thus emerges not only as a theoretical concept but as a strategic tool for repositioning manual practices as acts of resistance that restore connections between body, community, and environment. The concept demonstrates transformative potential for public policies, innovation methodologies that reconcile tradition and contemporaneity, and for educational models capable of navigating contemporary complexities seeking material sensitivity, cultural awareness, and ethical responsibility.

Why the "Artisanal Intelligence" Concept?

In a historical moment where artificial intelligence dominates technological and economic narratives, we propose the concept of Artisanal Intelligence as a critical and affirmative counterpoint. This term is not mere semantic provocation but an epistemological strategy aimed at repositioning craftsmanship as a complex system of knowledge, thus resisting the reduction of intelligence to algorithms and data. As Franco Berardi (2020) observes, the formatting of subjectivity by digital systems requires the reinvention of vocabularies that rescue forgotten human dimensions—gestuality, materiality, slow time—as forms of resistance and the search for autonomy.

The choice of the term "Intelligence" is deliberate as it aims to critically appropriate a concept dominated by technocracy, resignifying it. While Artificial Intelligence operates through abstract and scalable patterns, Artisanal Intelligence questions Western civilization's historical difficulty in connecting head and hand (thought and touch), theory and practice, as well as the historical dichotomies that legitimized their domination by separating theory (access for the "educated") from artisanal practices (restricted to the "trained" in work). For Federici (2017), this division is rooted in structures that oppose the "high" (technological, abstract, masculinized) to the "low" (manual, concrete, feminized), perpetuating the historical devaluation of artisanal work and labor performed mostly by women.

Artisanal Intelligence does not pretend to be a fixed category but an open system that incorporates productive tensions: Tradition as innovation; Technique as therapy; and Production as resistance. It emerges as a concept-arena—a space of dispute and reinvention—where these confront each other: Technological acceleration vs. Expanded temporality of manual making (Alvelos et al., 2021); Digital homogenization vs. Material diversity (Grasseni, 2007); and Cognitive alienation vs. Situated cognition (Groth, 2016). Appropriating the term "intelligence" to qualify artisanal practices constitutes a political act of cultural translation that makes marginalized knowledge visible in dominant languages.

The Concept as Antidote to "Projected Amnesia"

The Artisanal Intelligence concept proposal, as well as its potential semantic impacts, aims to reposition artisanal practices within contemporary critical debate. This is a linguistic strategy and therefore not neutral: it is a semantic resistance act against reductionist views of craftsmanship. This concept operates in two interconnected dimensions:

Conceptual Redefinition

The expression "Artisanal Intelligence" seeks to overcome simplistic dichotomies (tradition vs. innovation, technique vs. theory) by integrating technical, cognitive, and cultural knowledge into a single system. It is a semantic choice that:

- Expands craftsmanship's scope, associating it with notions such as integrated system and strategic knowledge (in contrast to reductionist views that limit it to "handmade").
- Shifts focus from manual production to intellectual and cultural dimensions.

Discursive Repositioning

Semantic repercussions aim to alter structures of social and economic valuation of craftsmanship:

- Legitimation strategy: by using "intelligence," the term brings artisanal practices closer to fields like science and technology, contesting epistemic hierarchies that marginalize non-academic knowledge.
- Overcoming stereotypes: breaks with the association of artisan as mere executor of ancestral techniques, repositioning them as agents of systemic innovation.

Artisanal Intelligence emerges as a counterpoint to what Alvelos et al. (2021) call "projected cultural amnesia"—systematic discard of ancestral knowledge in favor of dominant systems of accelerated transformation. This mechanism operates as a forgetting program that systematically devalues the past and imposes accelerated cycles of novelty that discard consolidated knowledge.

As Adamson (2013) proposes, we seek to reposition manual making not as residual but as a strategic tool for questioning industrial society assumptions. Artisanal Intelligence thus arises not only as a theoretical concept but as a political-epistemic instrument that seeks to reconfigure power and knowledge relations by repositioning manual making as an axis for social transformation. The concept is founded on the integration of multiple theoretical perspectives: embodied cognition (Nimkulrat & Groth, 2024); neurobiological benefits of manual making (Huotilainen et al., 2018); cultural hybridization in artisanal practices (Canclini, 1990); its ethical and philosophical dimension (Adamson, 2013); its economic and political implications (Keller, 2014); its therapeutic potential (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997); its contribution to sustainability (Walker, 2014); and, in an apparent paradox, its relevance for technological innovation, demonstrating that it is not an obstacle to innovation but its ethical

and creative foundation—a premise that redefines both manual making and technological progress (Gershenfeld, 2005).

Transversal Axes of Contemporary Craftsmanship

The results presented here constitute a conceptual architecture that organizes the complexity of contemporary artisanal practices around three interconnected axes. This structuring does not represent rigid classification but an analytical tool that allows understanding how different dimensions of artisanal making articulate to form an integrated knowledge system.

The three identified axes form an interconnected system that seeks to characterize the artisanal phenomenon in its complexity.

Ethical-Political Axis: Values, Economy, and Environment

This axis consolidates the critical dimension of contemporary craftsmanship as micropolitical resistance to extractive models, integration of ethical values, alternative economies, and regenerative ecological practices capable of reconfiguring sustainable productive relations. This axis is characterized by:

Ethical Positioning Regarding Accelerated Consumption

Contemporary craftsmanship can be viewed as an arena of ethical contestation, articulating practices that challenge hegemonic capitalist logics through regenerative productive cycles. This is recognized by Alvelos et al. (2019) in how Portuguese weaving prioritizes durability over disposability, establishing direct relationships with local materials.

Economic mode alternative to industrial logics

Artisanal practices manifest in creating short value chains that connect producers and consumers in fair exchanges, contrasting with extractivist models. As Keller (2014) observes, contemporary craftsmanship creates "economic systems that value quality, meaning, and longevity over quantity and standardization," thus offering viable alternatives to mass production.

Sustainable approach to material interaction

Territoriality emerges as a fundamental attribute of craftsmanship, linking techniques to specific ecosystems (Canclini, 1990). These practices constitute "material meaning systems" that reconcile production and sustainability (Walker, 2014).

Essential Attributes guiding the Ethical-Political axis:

- a. Ethical positioning: conscious opposition to accelerated and disposable consumption.

- b. Alternative economy: productive models that prioritize direct relationships and short value chains
- c. Material sustainability: practices that recognize environmental impacts and promote regenerative cycles.
- d. Political resistance: micropolitics of artisanal practices as contestation to dominant systems.
- e. Territoriality: connection with local materials, techniques, and economies.

Technical-Cultural Axis: Processes, Identities, and Temporalities

This axis addresses craftsmanship as a field of preserving ancestral techniques as a living archive of cultural knowledge while innovating with hybrid practices to affirm local identities and preserve unique forms of interaction with materials and meanings.

Knowledge system transmitted between generations

Intergenerational transmission occurs through "hand pedagogies" (Sennett, 2008), a teaching-learning method based on direct knowledge transmission through manual practice and ritualized gesture imitation, valuing the body as cognitive territory. Marchand (2008) calls this "operational memory," essential for preserving techniques at risk of extinction.

Cultural vehicle of resistance and identity

"Craftivism," a concept proposed by Corbett (2019), exemplifies how artisanal patterns function as identity and political codes through which communities express resistance to cultural homogenization.

Living historical heritage

Artisanal materiality functions as a living archive of cultural knowledge, resisting global homogenization. Grasseni (2007) highlights how "skilled vision" transmitted between artisans preserves not only techniques but specific ways of perceiving and interacting with materials and meanings.

Field of technical innovation

Hybridization characterizes artisanal practices that critically dialogue with modernity. Cardini & Noguera (2023) study integration between artificial intelligence and traditional patterns, creating territories of expression without compromising cultural authenticity.

Essential Attributes guiding the Technical-Cultural axis

- a. Technical hybridization: dialogue between ancestral techniques and contemporary technologies
- b. Identity expression: manifestation and preservation of specific cultural identities

- c. Expanded temporality: resistance to programmed obsolescence through material durability
- d. Intergenerational transmission: continuity and adaptation of technical knowledge through time
- e. Signifying materiality: objects as carriers of narratives and cultural meanings

Cognitive-Experiential Axis: Body, Mind, and Community

This axis explores interaction between body, mind, and community in manual making, uniting regenerative benefits and collaborative learning, creating environments that can bring sensitive and critical experience to traditional education.

Embodied practice that unifies mind and body

Embodied cognition in manual making constitutes a unique knowledge system distributed between body, tools, and environment. Neuroscientific studies (Huotilainen et al., 2018) prove that activities like embroidery activate specific neural networks, promoting therapeutic flow states.

Therapeutic process of well-being

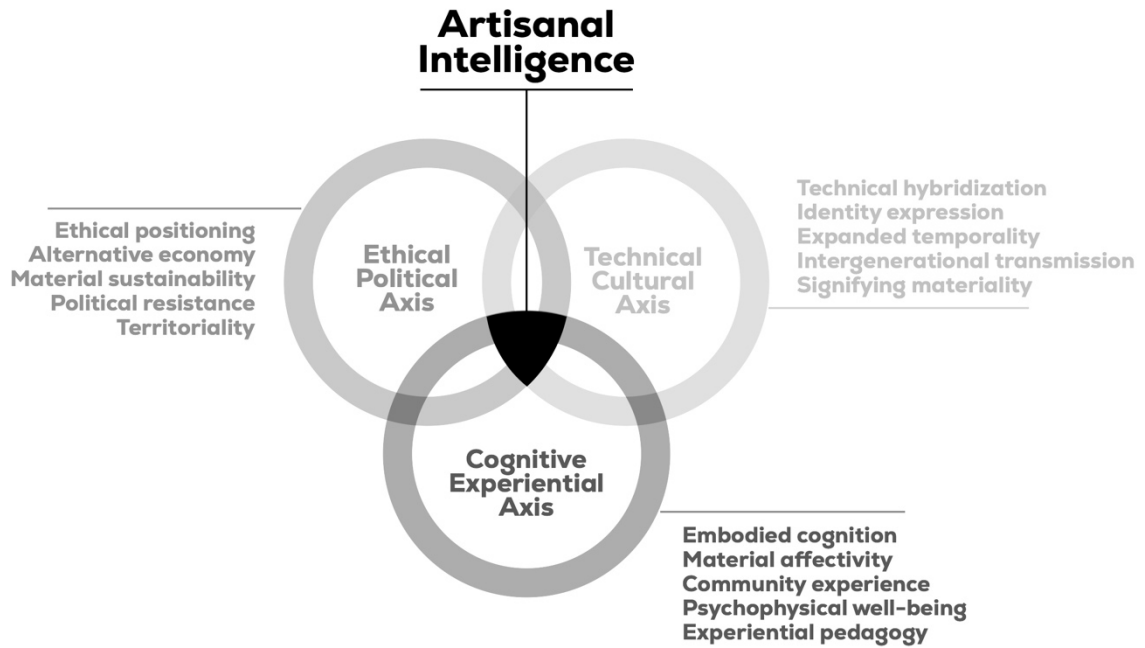
Keyes et al. (2024) document how tactile engagement with natural materials strengthens social connections while rehabilitating psychomotor functions, with significant benefits for mental health and subjective well-being.

Integrative educational paradigm

Freire (1987) and Wenger (1999) offer theoretical foundations for understanding how artisanal communities of practice create meaningful learning environments that transcend "banking education," a concept proposed by Freire (1987), promoting autonomy and critical engagement.

Essential Attributes guiding the Cognitive-Experiential axis

- a. Embodied cognition: integration between mental and bodily processes in manual making
- b. Material affectivity: emotional connections established in interaction with materials
- c. Community experience: construction of social networks through shared making
- d. Psychophysical well-being: therapeutic effects of engagement in manual practices
- e. Experiential pedagogy: learning through direct making and sensitive experimentation



Contributions of Artisanal Intelligence in Designer Education

The introduction of Artisanal Intelligence principles in higher design education could reconnect segmented knowledge through integration between tradition and innovation, as well as humanize educational processes through valuing regenerative dimensions and well-being of manual making, while politicizing education by evidencing how craftsmanship constitutes a form of resistance to oppressive structures. Contributions of each axis to gaps identified in the Introduction are identified below.

The Ethical-Political Axis: Arena of Contestation

Guided by opposition to accelerated consumption, short-chain economy, material sustainability, micropolitical resistance, and territoriality, this axis could bring significant complementary contributions to critical and territorial deficiencies:

Against Production of Uncritical Specialists, the insertion of Artisanal Intelligence principles could develop "political consciousness" through understanding artisanal productive chains, thereby revealing how economic structures shape design. Critical analysis of value systems will promote the formation of critical thinkers capable of questioning and transforming established structures, thus transcending mere technical efficiency to embrace social responsibility.

Against Epistemic Homogenization, it will stimulate "cultural counter-hegemony" through valuing marginalized knowledge, thus operating as resistance to globalizing standardization.

It will strengthen "epistemic sovereignty" by recognizing community knowledge as legitimate sources of innovation and academic recognition of these historically excluded knowledge systems.

Finally, against Territorial Disconnection, it will articulate "territorial economy" through strengthening local productive chains as an alternative to homogenizing globalization. It will develop "regional autonomy" by strengthening endogenous productive capacities and reducing external dependence; these actions will create "cultural protection" against improper appropriation of traditional knowledge.

The Technical-Cultural Axis: Vehicle of Transmission and Hybridization

Founded on technical hybridization, identity expression, expanded temporality, intergenerational transmission, and signifying materiality, this axis could contribute to overcoming separation between technique and culture:

Against Separation between Theory and Practice, adopting Artisanal Intelligence principles will promote "artisanal praxis" that naturally integrates theoretical knowledge and practical experience through artisanal techniques. It will recognize that artisanal traditions contain "embodied wisdom"—implicit theories about materials, processes, and forms—stimulating "innovation through practice," innovation in which theoretical discoveries emerge during systematic manual experimentation.

Against Dominant Technical Rationality, it will favor "expanded rationality" through traditional knowledge that is technically efficient but loaded with cultural meaning, developing "multiple rationalities" by recognizing different design logics present in diverse artisanal traditions.

Against Disconnected Innovation, it will ground "incremental innovation" through recognizing artisanal traditions as continuous innovation systems across generations. It will promote technological hybridization by creatively integrating ancestral techniques and emerging technologies, thus sustaining development of "evolutionary continuity," which understands innovation as a historical process that connects past, present, and future.

The Cognitive-Experiential Axis: Neurobiological Paradigm of Manual Making

This axis is founded on embodied cognition, material affectivity, community experience, psychophysical well-being, and experiential pedagogy, and could contribute to restoring connection between body, mind, and community:

Against Passive Pedagogy, applying Artisanal Intelligence precepts will foster "bodily protagonism," where the body functions as an active instrument of knowledge and not merely as a passive receptor. It could develop self-knowledge through reflective practices that

promote autonomy and critical consciousness; these changes will foster "situated learning" through direct engagement with materials and their processes.

Against Epistemic Homogenization, it will promote "epistemic regeneration" by identifying manual making as a process of reconnection with bodily knowledge marginalized by Western rationality. It could develop "cognitive diversity" through multiple forms of intelligence present in artisanal practices; these processes will favor "sensory inclusion" of tactile, visual, and kinesthetic knowledge traditionally excluded from academia.

Against Dominant Technical Rationality, it will foster "sensitive rationality" by integrating emotional, aesthetic, and sensory dimensions into decision-making processes. This experience will develop "qualified intuition" and boost reflection-in-action by valuing improvisation and adaptability as legitimate professional knowledge.

Final Considerations and Future

By adopting Artisanal Intelligence assumptions in higher design education, pathways open for transformation that goes beyond punctual adjustments and could provide epistemological and social change in multiple dimensions.

For higher design education students, the alliance between the three axes—Ethical-Political, Technical-Cultural, and Cognitive-Experiential—may favor development of critical consciousness about economic and social structures that shape professional practice. Spitz (2021) argues that "practicing design and learning design" should be inseparable activities that integrate reflection on the political impact of projects. Students could develop competencies to build autonomous professional trajectories, resisting structural precarization that characterizes contemporary creative markets by merging technical competence, political consciousness, and cultural sensitivity.

For institutions, adopting Artisanal Intelligence principles could transform design schools into living laboratories, bringing classrooms closer to local productive contexts (Alvelos, Chatterjee and Almeida, 2021). These institutions would become agents of cultural regeneration by preserving traditional knowledge while promoting contextualized innovation.

Regarding technology democratization, Neil Gershenfeld's (2005) ideas about the "personal manufacturing revolution" could, in principle, gain new momentum when mediated by Artisanal Intelligence, thus uniting manual techniques and digital tools for more humane design.

Transformation Horizons

Pedagogical experience inspired by Artisanal Intelligence has potential to reconfigure the design field, thus proposing an epistemology that merges embodied knowledge, territorial responsibility, and sustainable innovation.

In terms of productive relations, inserting Artisanal Intelligence into higher design education could stimulate development of "collaborative production networks" that connect academic institutions, artisanal communities, and specialized markets. These networks could operate according to solidarity economy logics, prioritizing quality over quantity, meaning over standardization, and sustainability over accelerated growth.

Impacts on Research and Development

Academic legitimization of Artisanal Intelligence could substantially expand design research horizons, which could incorporate ethnographic methodologies, material culture studies, and cognitive neuroscience as systematic investigation fields. This expanded interdisciplinarity will generate unprecedented knowledge about creative processes, material sustainability, and embodied cognition.

Educational Policy

Dissemination of Artisanal Intelligence ideas could influence broader educational policies that, by valuing practical knowledge, could offer alternatives to the technicist model and arguments for valuing practical knowledge at all educational levels.

Future Research Agenda

For next steps, we propose research directions capable of deepening the transformative potential of Artisanal Intelligence in higher design education.

- Studies could explore how integration of artisanal practices in design disciplines alters students' ethical-political perceptions;
- Investigations could map technical-cultural hybridization processes and document how ancestral techniques dialogue with digital tools and generate unprecedented forms of identity expression and sustainable innovation;
- Longitudinal research could examine cognitive-experiential effects of "thinking with hands" in integrated laboratories and measure gains in material sensitivity, psychophysical well-being, and community cohesion;

- Qualitative evaluation instruments could be developed to capture territorial consciousness and collaborative ethics, proposing self-evaluation protocols and distributed systems in contextualized projects;
- Projects could analyze viability of permanent partnerships between universities and artisanal communities, based on shared governance mechanisms and knowledge preservation;
- Comparative studies could confront conventional and integrated curricula to identify success indicators that surpass productivity metrics and incorporate human, cultural, and environmental dimensions.

Future Challenges

Implementation of Artisanal Intelligence principles in higher design education, although promising, could face significant obstacles requiring careful navigation. Institutional resistance could arise since valuing embodied knowledge would confront hierarchies that privilege quantitative methods and indicators over tacit practices.

Structural limitations would include investments in infrastructure for traditional workshops, faculty training in technical-cultural mediation, and establishing partnerships with local artisanal communities—whose establishment would depend on legal frameworks. Additionally, market pressures would tend to generate tension between critical education and immediate employability demands, as creative industries typically prioritize rapid technical specialization and accelerated productivity.

Finally, methodological challenges would emerge from the need to develop evaluation systems capable of capturing competencies such as material sensitivity and territorial consciousness—dimensions inherent to Artisanal Intelligence but invisible to conventional indicators.

Prospective Vision

Artisanal Intelligence does not present itself as nostalgia for the past but as an invitation to explore other ways of learning, designing, and manufacturing. By articulating tradition and innovation, artisanal practice could inspire professionals willing to navigate twenty-first-century complexities with cultural sensitivity, valuing error as part of learning, recognizing local knowledge as legitimate epistemologies, and ethical education oriented toward social responsibility. These professionals would be capable of proposing solutions that could transcend limiting dichotomies between efficiency and meaning, innovation and tradition, global and local—thus overcoming gaps of epistemic homogenization and territorial disconnection that characterize current education.

We propose an instrument for building alternative futures anchored in reintegration of human traditions and millennial wisdom with the transformative potential of contemporary technologies.

Note: In this chapter, Perplexity AI (web version; accessed on September 29, 2025) was used exclusively to assist in the translation process.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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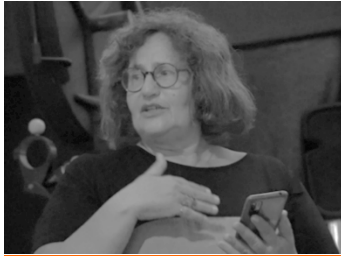
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Jessica Fiala is an independent scholar, consultant, and dancer based in Minneapolis (USA). Her research focuses on intersections of the body, space, and identity, with past projects ranging from transcultural Bharatanatyam practice to postcolonial museum exhibitions, site-based dance, and embodiment in virtual reality. Her writing is included in the anthology *The Ruined Archive* (2014) and the journals *Diálogos com a arte* (2016, 2019), *Journal of Somaesthetics* (2020, 2022), *Public Art* (2022, 2023), and the online publication *Immerse*. Jessica was the research coordinator for the 2015 International Award for Public Art and is currently a company member of Ragamala Dance and a research associate at the consulting firm 8 Bridges Workshop.

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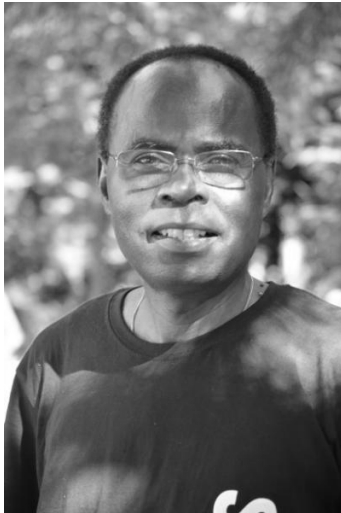


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