

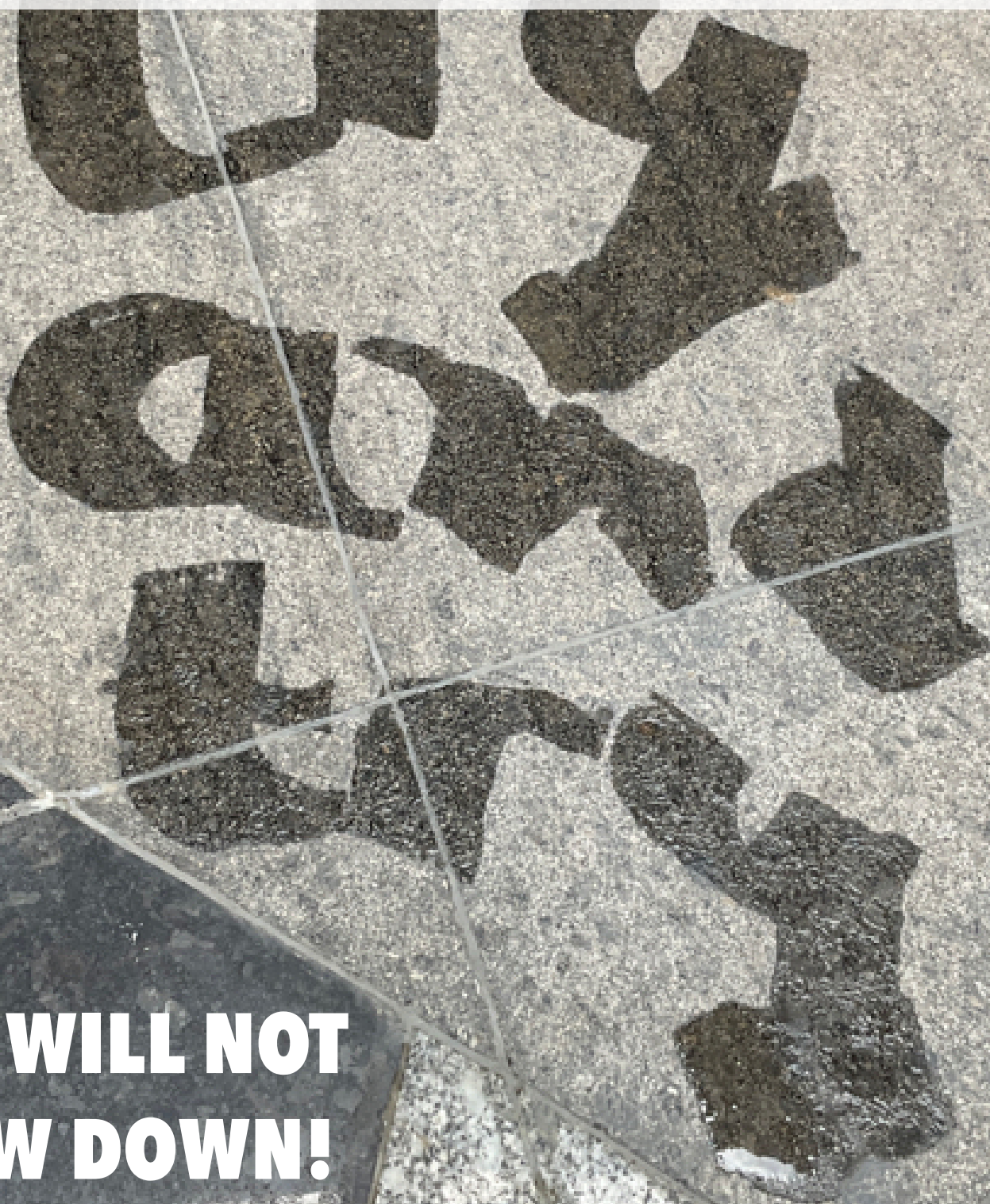
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**WE WILL NOT
BOW DOWN!**

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EDITORIAL

NÃO NOS CURVAREMOS!

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INVISIBILIDADES, a Revista Ibero-Americana de Investigação em Educação, Cultura e Artes, está especialmente aberta aos profissionais da educação através das artes; educação visual; educação teatral; educação musical; educação não formal através das artes e da educação artística. Para esta edição especial, com o título genérico “Não nos curvaremos”, emprestado das comemorações da Semana Internacional da Educação Artística da Aliança Mundial para a Educação Artística (WAAE), quisemos focar os recentes conflitos e desequilíbrios globais e locais e questionar como a educação artística, as teorias, formas e práticas artísticas, pedagógicas e curriculares estão a responder à rapidez das tecnologias, aos desequilíbrios climáticos e sociais, à imprevisibilidade e aos eventos disruptivos. Recebemos artigos muito interessantes para esta convocatória, incluindo práticas contemporâneas de educação artística e reflexões sobre aspetos curriculares da educação artística em contextos formais e não formais.

Para esta edição, convidámos os membros do Fórum Executivo da WAAE durante o ano de 2025: Sanja Krsmanović Tasić, Presidente da IDEA; Sarah Knox, Vice presidente da World Dance Alliance e Patrícia Gonzalez, presidente da ISME. Durante a Semana Internacional da Educação Artística de 2025, as editoras convidadas prepararam em conjunto uma série de webinars com o seguinte lema:

Nós, educadores artísticos de todas as áreas, não nos curvaremos!
Através da arte na educação, abordamos questões de justiça social e climática, promovemos a empatia e a compreensão.
Perante o atual estado de violência global, não nos curvaremos!
Comprometemo-nos com a expressão artística como ferramenta de diálogo, reconciliação e inclusão.
Perante o atual estado de bipolarização, racismo e xenofobia, posicionar-nos-emos firmemente contra eles!
Comprometemo-nos com a cidadania democrática e com a construção da paz.

Esta edição da revista Invisibilidades está imbuída do mesmo espírito de resiliência e esperança no poder transformador da educação artística. A primeira secção, em inglês, apresenta autores que contribuíram para um dos webinars das comemorações da Semana Internacional da Educação Artística (WAAE) de 2025. O primeiro artigo, da autoria de Nausheen Iftikhar, do Paquistão, recorda-nos formas alternativas de criação de imagens, estratégias cruciais para a comunicação, a expressão e a construção de significado, reconhecendo a diversidade de estilos de desenho de crianças e jovens e propondo experiências de observação e colaboração entre crianças e os seus pais para promover a inclusão na criação artística. O segundo artigo, da autoria de William Yip, encenador, educador teatral, líder pedagógico e artista educador, examina o impacto transformador do Projeto Comunitário de Educação Dramática nas Escolas Rurais no enfrentamento dos desafios educacionais e emocionais enfrentados pelas crianças marginalizadas nas zonas rurais da China. O terceiro artigo, da autoria de Modesto Corderi Novoa, educador de língua espanhola especializado no ensino do chinês e do espanhol, discute a pedagogia do teatro aplicada à aprendizagem de línguas no contexto da história singular de Macau através de duas atividades teatrais. O artigo seguinte é um ensaio visual de Aditi Jain, da Índia, que explora como os planos de aula de arte sustentáveis, especificamente aqueles que incorporam materiais naturais, reciclados ou efémeros, contribuem para a consciencialização ambiental e incentivam comportamentos de tomada de riscos.

A segunda parte da edição inclui artigos em línguas ibéricas. Diego Ortega, ilustrador e professor de arte de Espanha, aborda a crescente procura de reconexão com a natureza através de atividades educativas, propondo uma abordagem de observação e escuta de aves como elementos-chave para o desenvolvimento de propostas de ensino artístico, através da análise de alguns exemplos. Esther Cardona, educadora de arte de Espanha, discute a produção audiovisual baseada no stop-motion como recurso didático. No próximo artigo, Martha Villanueva, uma jovem educadora de arte do sul de Espanha, analisa o ecofeminismo, destacando os trabalhos de artistas como Cecilia Vicuña, Ana Mendieta, Regina José Galindo e Lucía Loren, que propõem ferramentas pedagógicas e de sensibilização para promover a equidade, a sustentabilidade e as ligações entre as pessoas e a natureza sem hierarquias. O último artigo, da autoria de Romeu Curto, educador musical português, e do seu orientador de doutoramento, Nuno Fraga, na Universidade da Madeira, analisa o currículo artístico dos Conservatórios de Música e das escolas públicas profissionais de Música em Portugal.

Foi um grande desafio para mim e para a Teresa editar esta edição da revista, devido à diversidade de línguas e âmbitos dos artigos. Gostaríamos de expressar aqui a nossa sincera gratidão aos fantásticos revisores Emily Akuno; Rui Alexandre; Maria Jesus Agra; Shakil Y. Rahim; Melanie Sarantou; Ana Maria Barbero; José Alberto Rodrigues; Lorena Cueva e, claro, às nossas editoras convidadas Sanja Krsmanović Tasić; Sarah Knox e Patricia Gonzalez tornaram esta aventura uma possibilidade para conectar formas alternativas de ser e permanecer na educação artística.

Como editoras principais desta revista, continuaremos a dar visibilidade a educadores de arte, investigadores em educação artística, educadores de arte comunitários e trabalhadores culturais que defendem a expressão artística como ferramenta de diálogo, reconciliação e inclusão.

Não nos curvaremos!

Gulpilhares, 15 de dezembro de 2025

Ângela Saldanha

EDITORIAL

WE WILL NOT BOW DOWN!

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INVISIBILIDADES, the Ibero-American Journal of Research in Education, Culture and Arts, is especially open to professionals in education through the arts; visual education; theater-education, music education; non-formal education through the arts and arts education. For this special number, with the generic title ' We will not Bow Down', we borrowed the title from World Alliance for Arts Education WAAE celebrations of the international week of arts education, we wanted to focus on the recent global and local conflicts and unbalances and question how might arts education, artistic, pedagogical and curricular theories, forms and practices are responding to celerity of the technologies, climate and social unbalances, unpredictability and disruptive events. We received very interesting articles to this call including contemporary practices of arts education and reflections about curricular aspects of arts education both in formal and non-formal settings.

For this issue we invited members of WAAE executive Forum during 2025: Sanja Krsmanović Tasić, IDEA President; Sarah Knox, World Dance Alliance Vice-president and Patricia Gonzalez, ISME President. Together we prepared a series of webinars during the 2025 international week of arts education with the following motto:

We arts educators, from all areas of arts, will not bow down!

Through arts in education we address social justice and climate justice issues, we foster empathy and understanding.

Facing the current state of global violence, we will not bow down!

We pledge for artistic expression as a tool for dialogue, reconciliation, and inclusivity.

Facing the current state of bipolarization, racism and xenophobia, we will stand up strongly against them!

We pledge for democratic citizenship and peacebuilding.

This issue of the journal, Invisibilidades, is embedded in the same spirit of resilience and hope in the transformative power of arts education. The first section, in English language, presents authors who contributed to one of the webinars of the WAAE 2025 celebrations of the international week of arts education. The first article by Nausheen Iftikhar, from Pakistan, reminds us about alternative forms of image-making, crucial strategies for communication, expression, and meaning-making, acknowledging the diversity of drawing styles of children and young people and proposing observational and collaborative experiences between children and their parents to enhance the inclusivity of art-making. The second article by William Yip, theatre director, drama educator, instructional leader, and teaching artist examines the transformative impact of the Rural Schools Drama Education Community Project in addressing the educational and emotional challenges faced by left-behind children in rural China. The third article by Modesto Corderi Novoa, Spanish language educator, specialized in teaching Chinese and Spanish languages, discusses Drama pedagogy, applied to language learning in the contexts of Macao's unique history — blending cultures through centuries of trade and cultural exchange through two drama-based activities. The next article is a visual essay by Aditi Jain, from India, explores how sustainable art lesson plans, specifically those that incorporate natural, recycled, or ephemeral materials, contribute to environmental awareness and nurture risk-taking behaviours.

The second part of the issue, includes articles in Iberian languages. Diego Ortega, illustrator and artist-teacher from Spain, brings up the growing demand for reconnection with nature through educational activities proposing an approach to bird watching and listening as key elements for the development of artistic teaching proposals, through the analysis of some examples. Esther Cardona, art educator from Spain, discusses audiovisual production based on stop-motion as a teaching resource. In the next article Martha Villanueva, young art educator, from South Spain analyses ecofeminism, highlighting the works of artists such as Cecilia Vicuña, Ana Mendieta, Regina José Galindo, and Lucía Loren proposing pedagogical and awareness-raising tools to promote equity, sustainability, and connections between people and nature without hierarchies. The last article, from Romeu Curto, Portuguese music educator and his PhD supervisor Nuno Fraga in the university of Madeira analyses artistic curriculum of Conservatories of Music and public professional schools of Music in Portugal.

It was a great challenge to edit this issue of the journal for Angela and me, because

of the diversity of languages and scopes of the articles. We want to express here our sincere gratitude to the fantastic reviewers Emily Akuno; Rui Alexandre; Maria Jesus Agra, Shakil Y. Rahim; Melanie Sarantou; Ana Maria Barbero; José Alberto Rodrigues, Lorena Cueva and, of course, to our invited editors Sanja Krsmanović Tasić; Sarah Knox and Patricia Gonzalez that made this adventure a possibility for linking alternative ways of being and staying in arts education.

As main editors of this journal, we will continue to give visibility to art educators, researchers in arts education, community art educators and cultural workers pledging for artistic expression as a tool for dialogue, reconciliation, and inclusivity. We will not Bow Down!

Viseu, 15 December 2025

Teresa Torres de Eça

Notes:

About the World Alliance for Arts Education: <https://www.waae.online/>

About the 2025 International Arts Education Week: Stand up and Strong for Arts Education (https://www.waae.online/waae_arts_education_week_2025.html)

PROLOGUE

Declaración de Atenas y el Marco para la Educación en Cultura y Artes de la UNESCO, 2024

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Patricia Gonzalez
ISME President
(WAAE Chair
May 2024-May 2025)

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En un tiempo marcado por transformaciones profundas, sociales, ambientales, tecnológicas y culturales, la educación artística se vuelve un espacio indispensable para sostenernos, reconstruirnos e imaginar, juntas y juntos, otros futuros posibles. Esta dimensión crítica de la educación artística quedó especialmente clara durante la Cumbre Mundial de Educación Artística organizada por la Alianza Mundial para la Educación Artística (WAAE) en Atenas en 2024. Las discusiones de esa cumbre, que culminaron en la Declaración de Atenas, evidenciaron la urgencia de garantizar el acceso universal a las artes, fortalecer la equidad, promover la sostenibilidad y reconocer la creatividad como motor esencial para sociedades más justas, diversas y democráticas. La WAAE ha demostrado un papel decisivo en este proceso, no solo coordinando y articulando la cumbre, sino también trabajando de manera sostenida para situar la educación artística como un derecho humano y un bien público a nivel global, y para guiar la elaboración de compromisos compartidos entre actores educativos, culturales y gubernamentales.

Este número especial de *Invisibilidades* surge en un momento en el que estas reflexiones globales encuentran un eco directo. Su publicación ocurre tras la presentación del Marco para la Educación en Cultura y Artes de la UNESCO en Febrero de 2024, que orienta a los países hacia políticas más integrales, intersectoriales y socialmente inclusivas. ISME ha asumido un compromiso activo con las recomendaciones de este Marco, promoviendo su implementación a través de programas, investigación y colaboración internacional. Los artículos reunidos en este volumen no solo dialogan con estos lineamientos, sino que los muestran en acción, evidenciando cómo los principios globales se adaptan y se experimentan en contextos locales diversos. Desde esta perspectiva relacional, emergen afinidades profundas entre las propuestas de los autores y las prioridades tanto del Marco como de la Declaración de Atenas, afinidades que buscan enriquecer las agendas globales desde la práctica cotidiana y la investigación situada.

Uno de los temas más reiterados en el Marco es la necesidad de garantizar acceso e inclusión en todas las dimensiones de la vida cultural. Esta preocupación aparece de manera concreta en el análisis de Nausheen Iftikhar, cuya crítica a las miradas adultocéntricas sobre el dibujo infantil revela cómo las escuelas todavía reproducen criterios estéticos jerárquicos que invisibilizan la diversidad de expresiones de niñas, niños y adolescentes. El Marco sostiene que la educación artística debe acoger múltiples formas de conocer y representar el mundo, libres de estigmatizaciones o expectativas que excluyan maneras de crear consideradas “no convencionales”. Iftikhar confirma esta necesidad y la concreta, mostrando cómo la noción de “dibujo válido” puede convertirse en una barrera que contradice el derecho a la expresión plena, invitando a replantear los marcos pedagógicos desde la perspectiva de la infancia.

La inclusión también adquiere un carácter profundamente social y comunitario en el trabajo de William Yip. Su proyecto en escuelas rurales de China muestra cómo el drama puede abrir espacios de resistencia emocional y acompañamiento para niñas y niños “dejados-atrás”, afectados por la migración laboral de sus cuidadores. Al ofrecer un entorno para reconstruir vínculos, fortalecer la autoestima y desarrollar habilidades socioemocionales, el drama se convierte en una herramienta para contrarrestar desigualdades estructurales. Aunque el Marco promueve el bienestar y la cohesión social, la contribución de Yip muestra cómo estos principios se materializan en la práctica, no como consignas abstractas sino

como relaciones pedagógicas que reconocen la complejidad humana de los estudiantes y la fragilidad de sus entornos.

Las artes como puente intercultural, otro eje central tanto de la Declaración de Atenas como del Marco, se expresan de manera singular en la propuesta de Modesto Corderi Novoa en Macao. Su aproximación dramatúrgica a la historia lingüística y cultural del territorio revitaliza un patrimonio híbrido e invita a percibir la identidad como un proceso dinámico y plural. El Marco subraya la importancia de integrar lenguas, memorias y patrimonios diversos en la educación artística, pero Corderi muestra cómo estos principios se viven a través de actividades que conectan a los estudiantes con procesos históricos de intercambio, adaptación y convivencia, evidenciando que el diálogo intercultural se construye mediante experiencias sensibles.

La relación entre naturaleza, sostenibilidad y creación artística atraviesa varios artículos y refleja uno de los desafíos más urgentes de nuestro tiempo. En el caso de Aditi Jain, las pedagogías sostenibles que incorpora, mediante trabajo con materiales efímeros, reciclados o naturales, resignifican la práctica artística como un proceso donde la creatividad se fortalece al liberarse del miedo al error o a la permanencia. Su enfoque propone un modelo ecológicamente consciente en el que los materiales no son simples recursos sino elementos de un ecosistema con el que los estudiantes establecen una relación ética y sensible. Esta sensibilidad se refleja también en la propuesta de Diego Ortega, quien invita a reorientar la mirada hacia la naturaleza a través del dibujo de aves, la escucha de sus cantos y el diálogo entre artes visuales, música y paisajes sonoros. Ambas aproximaciones materializan la noción de “aprender con la naturaleza” que el Marco sitúa como central para formar sujetos capaces de habitar un planeta frágil. Jain lo hace mediante la transformación del aula en un laboratorio ecológico, Ortega mediante la reconexión con los entornos vivos. Leídas en conjunto, estas contribuciones profundizan el debate sobre cómo articular prácticas que respondan a la crisis climática y, al mismo tiempo, cultiven creatividad, observación y cuidado.

La presencia de lo digital introduce otra capa necesaria en este diálogo, y Esther Cardona lo aborda con claridad singular. Su trabajo sobre *stop motion* como herramienta de alfabetización audiovisual muestra cómo las tecnologías pueden integrarse de manera ética y crítica en el aula, abriendo posibilidades creativas sin renunciar a la reflexión. El Marco propone un uso responsable y consciente de las tecnologías, atendiendo desigualdades y riesgos. Cardona evidencia cómo esto se logra mediante experiencias que expanden la imaginación y fortalecen la capacidad de los estudiantes para interpretar, cuestionar y producir imágenes, mostrando que lo digital no es contrario a lo ecológico, sino un territorio complementario que debe habitarse con criterio.

La perspectiva ecofeminista desarrollada por Marta Villanueva Padilla en el artículo sobre arte, naturaleza y género añade un matiz indispensable. Al analizar obras de diversos artistas se revela cómo las jerarquías históricas que separan cuerpo y territorio, razón y sensibilidad, naturaleza y cultura han estado imbricadas en sistemas de opresión patriarcales y coloniales. Esta contribución no solo coincide con la insistencia del Marco en transversalizar la igualdad de género en la educación artística, sino que la amplía al mostrar cómo el arte puede ser un espacio de resistencia simbólica, crítica y transformadora. Desde

esta óptica, la educación artística se convierte en un campo para repensar la ética del cuidado, la reciprocidad y la justicia ambiental desde los cuerpos y las experiencias situadas.

Finalmente, el análisis de Romeu Curto y Nuno Fraga sobre la evolución normativa de la educación artística en Portugal introduce un nivel estructural crucial. Sus reflexiones muestran que principios como inclusión, sostenibilidad y diversidad no pueden depender exclusivamente de prácticas individuales o proyectos aislados. Requieren políticas públicas coherentes, marcos regulatorios estables y sistemas educativos que reconozcan la educación artística y musical como un componente esencial, no accesorio. Si el Marco enfatiza la importancia de fortalecer la gobernanza y la intersectorialidad, este estudio evidencia cómo dichas aspiraciones se construyen o se dificultan en la práctica a través de decisiones institucionales de largo aliento.

Consideradas en conjunto, las contribuciones de este volumen confirman que la educación artística no es un adorno curricular ni un privilegio cultural para unos pocos. Es un campo donde se ensayan respuestas a las grandes preguntas de nuestro tiempo: cómo convivimos en sociedades diversas, cómo cuidamos la vida humana y no humana en un planeta en crisis, cómo cultivamos miradas críticas en un entorno saturado de información, cómo reparamos desigualdades profundas y cómo enseñamos a imaginar futuros posibles.

En consonancia con la Declaración de Atenas de WAAE y con el Marco de la UNESCO, que posicionan la educación artística como derecho humano, bien público y componente imprescindible de los sistemas educativos contemporáneos, este número especial demuestra que las artes no solo acompañan los procesos educativos, sino que los transforman desde dentro. De igual manera, la Sociedad Internacional de Educación Musical (ISME) reafirma su compromiso de atender estas recomendaciones y de impulsar acciones concretas para la implementación del Marco de la UNESCO en todos los niveles y contextos de la educación musical y artística.

Este volumen nos invita a seguir tejiendo puentes entre contextos locales y marcos globales, entre investigación y acción, entre artes, culturas y territorios. Nos recuerda que, en un mundo marcado por la desigualdad, la polarización y la crisis ambiental, la educación artística sigue siendo una de las herramientas más poderosas para construir, desde lo cotidiano y lo colectivo, futuros más justos, pacíficos y sostenibles.

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International Society for Music Education (ISME)

PROLOGUE

Athens Declaration and the UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education

 10.64493/INV.21.01

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(WAAE Chair
May 2024-May 2025)

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In a time marked by profound social, environmental, technological, and cultural transformations, arts education becomes an indispensable space for sustaining ourselves, rebuilding, and imagining—together—other possible futures. This critical dimension of arts education became especially clear during the World Summit on Arts Education organized by the World Alliance for Arts Education (WAAE) in Athens in 2024. The discussions at that summit, which culminated in the Athens Declaration, highlighted the urgency of ensuring universal access to the arts, strengthening equity, promoting sustainability, and recognizing creativity as an essential driver for more just, diverse, and democratic societies. WAAE has played a decisive role in this process, not only by coordinating and shaping the summit, but also by consistently working to position arts education as a human right and public good globally, and by guiding the development of shared commitments among educational, cultural, and governmental actors.

This special issue of Invisibilidades emerges at a moment when these global reflections find a direct resonance. Its publication follows the release of the UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education in February 2024, which guides countries toward more integrated, cross-sectoral, and socially inclusive policies. ISME has taken an active role in responding to the Framework's recommendations by promoting implementation through programs, research, and international collaboration. The articles gathered in this volume not only dialogue with these guidelines but demonstrate them in action, showing how global principles are adapted and put into practice in diverse local contexts. From this relational perspective, deep affinities emerge between the authors' proposals and the priorities of both the Framework and the Athens Declaration—affinities that enrich global agendas through everyday practice and situated research.

One of the most emphasized themes in the Framework is the need to ensure access and inclusion across all dimensions of cultural life. This concern appears concretely in the analysis by Nausheen Iftikhar, whose critique of adult-centered views of children's drawing reveals how schools still reproduce hierarchical aesthetic criteria that render invisible the diversity of expressions among children and adolescents. The Framework states that arts education must welcome multiple ways of knowing and representing the world, free from stigmas or expectations that exclude forms of creation considered "non-conventional." Iftikhar confirms and deepens this need, showing how the notion of a "valid drawing" can become a barrier that contradicts the right to full expression, and calling for pedagogical frameworks to be rethought from the perspective of childhood.

Inclusion also takes on a deeply social and community-based dimension in the work of William Yip. His project in rural schools in China shows how drama can create spaces of emotional resistance and support for "left-behind" children affected by the labor migration of their caregivers. By offering an environment in which to rebuild relationships, strengthen self-esteem, and develop socioemotional skills, drama becomes a tool for addressing structural inequalities. While the Framework promotes well-being and social cohesion, Yip's contribution shows how these principles materialize in practice—not as abstract slogans but as pedagogical relationships that acknowledge the students' human complexity and the fragility of their environments.

The arts as an intercultural bridge—another central theme of both the Athens Declaration and the Framework—are expressed in a unique way in Modesto

Corderi Novoa's work in Macau. His dramaturgical approach to the territory's linguistic and cultural history revitalizes a hybrid heritage and invites us to understand identity as a dynamic and plural process. The Framework highlights the importance of integrating diverse languages, memories, and heritages into arts education, but Corderi shows how these principles come alive through activities that connect students with historical processes of exchange, adaptation, and coexistence, revealing that intercultural dialogue is built through sensitive experience.

The relationship between nature, sustainability, and artistic creation runs through several articles and reflects one of the most urgent challenges of our time. In Aditi Jain's case, the sustainable pedagogies she incorporates—working with ephemeral, recycled, or natural materials—reframe artistic practice as a process in which creativity grows by letting go of fear of error or permanence. Her approach proposes an ecologically conscious model in which materials are not merely resources but elements of an ecosystem with which students develop an ethical and sensitive relationship.

This sensitivity is also evident in Diego Ortega's work, which encourages students to redirect their attention toward nature through bird drawing, listening to bird songs, and connecting visual arts, music, and soundscapes. Both approaches put into practice the Framework's idea of "learning with nature," which it identifies as central to educating individuals capable of inhabiting a fragile planet. Jain does this by transforming the classroom into an ecological laboratory; Ortega, by reconnecting students with living environments. Read together, these contributions deepen the conversation about how to develop practices that respond to the climate crisis while cultivating creativity, observation, and care. The presence of digital media adds another essential layer to this dialogue, and Esther Cardona addresses it with remarkable clarity. Her work on stop-motion animation as a tool of audiovisual literacy shows how technologies can be integrated ethically and critically into the classroom, opening creative possibilities without abandoning reflection. The Framework calls for responsible and thoughtful use of technology, attentive to inequalities and risks. Cardona demonstrates how this is possible through experiences that expand imagination and strengthen students' ability to interpret, question, and produce images, showing that the digital is not opposed to the ecological but is a complementary space that must be approached with discernment.

The ecofeminist perspective developed by Marta Villanueva Padilla in the article on art, nature, and gender adds an indispensable layer of meaning. By analyzing works by various artists, Marta reveals how historical hierarchies separating body and territory, reason and sensitivity, nature and culture have been intertwined with patriarchal and colonial systems of oppression. This contribution not only aligns with the Framework's emphasis on mainstreaming gender equality in arts education but expands it by demonstrating how art can become a space for symbolic, critical, and transformative resistance. From this standpoint, arts education becomes a field in which to rethink the ethics of care, reciprocity, and environmental justice through embodied and situated experiences.

Finally, the analysis by Romeu Curto and Nuno Fraga on the evolution of arts education policy in Portugal introduces a crucial structural dimension. Their reflections show that principles such as inclusion, sustainability, and diversity

cannot rely solely on individual practices or isolated projects. They require coherent public policies, stable regulatory frameworks, and educational systems that recognize arts and music education as essential rather than peripheral components. If the Framework underscores the importance of strengthening governance and cross-sectoral collaboration, this study demonstrates how such aspirations are built—or hindered—in practice through long-term institutional decision-making. Taken together, the contributions in this volume confirm that arts education is neither a curricular ornament nor a cultural privilege for a few. It is a field in which responses to the great questions of our time are being shaped: how we live together in diverse societies, how we care for human and non-human life on a planet in crisis, how we cultivate critical perspectives in an environment saturated with information, how we repair deep inequalities, and how we teach the imagination of possible futures.

Aligned with WAAE's Athens Declaration and with UNESCO's Framework—which position arts education as a human right, a public good, and an essential component of contemporary educational systems—this special issue demonstrates that the arts not only accompany educational processes but transform them from within. Likewise, the International Society for Music Education (ISME) reaffirms its commitment to responding to these recommendations and advancing concrete actions to implement UNESCO's Framework across all levels and contexts of music and arts education.

This volume invites us to continue weaving bridges between local contexts and global frameworks, between research and action, and among arts, cultures, and territories. It reminds us that in a world marked by inequality, polarization, and environmental crisis, arts education remains one of the most powerful tools for building—through everyday and collective action—more just, peaceful, and sustainable futures.

PROLOGUE

Arts Education for Hope

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In February 2024 around 1000 culture and education stakeholders, including government ministers, policymakers, experts, NGOs as well as UN agencies, scholars and practitioners, gathered at the UNESCO World Conference on Culture and Arts Education in Abu Dhabi, to agree on a new global Framework for culture and arts education. The adoption of this global document marks a meaningful step in efforts to ensure that culture and arts education is appropriately developed and supported globally. As a side event WAAE- World Alliance for Arts Education, with other colleagues, organized a panel, where we discussed and presented the importance of monitoring of the implementation of such a valued document.

In October 2025, the UNESCO Implementation Guidance was presented at the 2025 Mondiacult event that took place in Barcelona. This global Framework outlines commitments such as prioritizing culture and arts education in teacher training, emphasizing local and indigenous cultures and heritage in the classroom, and recognizing the contribution of artistic and cultural skills to the professional world. The Framework is an advocacy and action document towards the development and inclusion of art, arts education and culture in world schools and institutions.

UNESCO believes the Framework will be a tool for Member States, amongst my country, Serbia, to shape integrated strategies and policies that anchor the cultural dimension in educational systems and support them to invest in

nurturing skills and competencies, notably through culture and arts, that respond to contemporary needs and opportunities.

At the Conference in Abu Dhabi, Portugal's Education Minister, João Marques da Costa, began his input with a critical question: why do still have to justify the need for arts and cultural education when we don't do the same for science physics or mathematics? The idea that we need a Framework to value the role of culture and arts is a reflection of where our humanity is at the moment. But still, this Framework is a useful tool for advocacy. What's equally important is implementing it into public policies and grassroot action, each defined by their specific context.

The Implementation Guide also has many good examples of practices around the world, as well as "Recommendations for policy-makers" and "Tips for Practitioners".

But documents such as these are not the only hard copies that influence, change or advocate for our field, the field of arts education. All the effort that is invested in publishing, showing and showcasing important practices have impact and relevance as well. A great example is INVISIBILIDADES, the Ibero-American Journal of Research in Education, Culture and Arts, published by APECV, our colleagues from Portugal. Teresa Torres de Eça, one of the Co-Editors of the journal, has been and is for many years one of the most significant figures in our World Alliance for Arts Education. Hers are the inspiring words of "We will not bow down!", calling to resilience and action.

The Ibero-American Journal of Research in Education, Culture and Arts has consistently positioned itself as a platform for voices across diverse artistic and educational fields, art education, art and design education, visual literacy, arts and community, drama/theatre education; and the growing intersections between arts, culture, technology, and society.

Rooted in an ethos of accessibility, the journal guarantees open content for all issues, ensuring that its insights, innovations, and provocations circulate widely among educators, researchers, artists, and communities. In this spirit, the journal has cultivated a readership that spans formal educators, non-formal and community arts practitioners, and scholars who understand the arts as a vital site of inquiry, imagination, and social transformation.

This special issue, titled We Will Not Bow Down, emerges from the recognition that we are living through a moment of rupture—a moment in which the arts and arts education must respond boldly to the accelerating crises that shape our collective present. The phrase "We will not bow down" signals defiance, but also resilience: a refusal to submit to violence, inequity, erasure, and the forces that diminish human and more-than-human life. It invites contributors to reflect on how arts education, through its curricular theories, pedagogical innovations, artistic practices, and research methodologies, can resist destructive paradigms and instead nurture ethical, sustainable, and imaginative ways of living and learning, such as respect for the nature, eco base practices and also including ecofeminism as one of the themes of the works presented.

Contributions that are part of the Journal grapple these questions from multiple disciplinary, methodological, cultural, and geopolitical perspectives. We shed a light and are interested primarily in the work of those scholars and practitioners who are developing decolonial, posthuman, Indigenous, feminist, ecological, and speculative approaches to art, learning, and community engagement. These

perspectives collectively challenge the longstanding assumptions embedded in Western and Eurocentric educational structures. They invite us to rethink the very foundations of teaching and learning: What counts as knowledge? Who is authorized to teach? What forms of artistic or embodied experience are legitimate? How do we build intergenerational, interspecies, and transdisciplinary alliances that extend beyond human exceptionalism?

Every 27th of November we in the International Drama/Theatre and Education Association celebrate the Day of Drama/Theatre Education, or more popularly said: IDEA Day. This year it was the 18th time we celebrated it ever since Tintti Karppinen, our colleague from Finland proposed it should be celebrated. Themes for the IDEA Day celebration have changed over the years. This year, the year when we find ourselves in confusion about the darkness and destruction that seems to prevail in the world, we have decided to have the theme of "Drama/Theatre for Hope" as the main focus of 2025 IDEA Day.

I would like to share some of my thoughts from this years IDEA DAY message. For me the sub-theme of the IDEA Day is "Hope in Action". Just being and hoping in these radical times is not enough. We are not in the position to sit and wait for better times to come, for things to resolve by themselves.

Rebecca Sonlit writes that hope is an embrace of the unknown and the unknowable and also an axe you break down doors with in an emergency (Sonlit, 2016). We are in the times of "radical hope" as explained by Jonathan Lear. Radical hope means grounding ourselves in the possibilities and making proactive efforts to transform them into promise. It is believing that there are ways to move forward, to survive, resist, and prevail, without knowing exactly where we will be when we arrive (Lear, 2008).

The work we do, in the field of arts education implies actually that, reimagining the future, recreating the world and ourselves in every class, project, through every process.

Through our work we present ourselves and our essence in the world. We have the possibility to transform in this process, and by transforming ourselves we transform the world.

I believe that we are capable of making this effort, of opening this possibility of casting the light on us, making us visible, the goodness and hope we bring with what we do, also bringing the light with us, the light of hope and change. Also, through the journal we are presenting in these occasions. We must change the paradigm of being in the margin to being in the center of education, life and humanity. What we bring are essential skills needed for us as humans to be able to sustain, survive and develop. We have the power of confronting all the dark issues of AI and digitalization, on the other hand embracing the good points it brings, by fighting for our work that demands physical presence and embodied practices.

We must convince the world that by marginalizing us, it is marginalizing the possibility of wellbeing and inner growth, and diminishing the possibility of working on the "ecology of the soul". We do need to work on it as diligently as we work on ecology in the world around us. Our inner worlds are as fragile, and sometimes polluted, darkened by so many factors.

We must stop justifying ourself and accepting the reduced space we are offered, but take center stage and grasp for ourselves the deserved spot we must have, and deserve.

This resilience, strength, this way of continuing, must be expressed firmly and patiently for all to see. For this year's UNESCO International Week of Arts Education we decided to use strong words, just as we made the decision in our declarations not to ask any more, but to demand. And words have energy in themselves.

So, we will not bow down, as Teresa wrote, but continue to create hope in action, in every class, every workshop, every time we do our work in drama/theatre, music, dance, visual art education.

We must not be afraid to shed light and get involved in the darkest of places, hoping that one day our role as arts educators and artists will not be just to "clean up the mess", and work on reconciliation, healing, overcoming trauma through art, creating bridges and connections where they have been torn by conflict, but will be there first of all for the prevention of all this tragedy that is happening in the world.

As we see injustice prevailing, human values diminished, we also see the rising of activism, of citizens, people entering the streets as a new space for expressing. In my country there is a constant succession of revolt and protests on the streets led by young people for over a year. This brings hope, hope for the future.

I invite you not only to read the articles within this issue, but to join a broader conversation about the role of the arts in shaping just, resilient, and hopeful futures. This journal invites educators, artists, researchers, and community practitioners to reflect on how we might collectively refuse the narratives of inevitability that accompany crisis. It encourages us to imagine education as an ethical, relational, and creative endeavor—one capable of responding to the unpredictability of the world not with despair, but with critical and radical hope and steadfast refusal.

To say "We will not bow down" is to affirm agency in the face of adversity; to hold onto the possibility of transformation; and to recognize the arts as essential to both survival and liberation. We hope that the articles in this special issue challenge, inspire, and sustain all those who believe that arts education remains a vital force in the creation of more just and imaginative worlds.

And for the end, just to add:

We will not bow down, but create hope in action.

Sanja Krsmanović Tasić

IDEA President 2020-2027

Member of the Presidential Forum of WAAE

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PROLOGUE

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We are living through a pivotal global moment for arts education. Over the past two years, new international commitments, urgent debates, and renewed collaborations have positioned culture and the arts not as peripheral enrichment, but as essential foundations for sustainable, equitable, and creative futures. However, this takes place within a landscape where arts institutions are threatened, funding is sparse, and STEM is increasingly prioritised. Yet global issues persist within our communities, and across our environments. These issues require the intrinsic qualities fostered by arts education to be advocated for like never before. We as artists know the power of arts education and we exclaim: We will not bow down.

This issue of Invisibilidades brings together scholarship that resonates deeply with the priorities articulated in UNESCO's Framework for Culture and Arts Education (2024) where the WAAE was present at its adoption in Abu Dhabi, and with the themes and dialogues that shaped the WAAE International Arts Education Week 2025. The World Alliance for Arts Education has been proactive in responding to the current needs of arts education, including through the creation and support of the Athens Declaration, developing out of the WAAE Global Arts Education Summit Athens 2024, Arts, Nature, Technology, Education: Harmony in Unity, in collaboration with the University of Athens.

As someone working at the intersection of artistic practice, education and leadership, I have witnessed how these frameworks and global events are reshaping our field in practical and grassroots ways. Not only do they offer direction but also an expanded sense of purpose that acknowledges the arts as sites of knowledge, cultural vitality, democratic participation, and human flourishing. They cement our understanding that creative practices and learning are profoundly relational and offer poignant ways of thinking, connecting, imagining, healing, and transforming. Most importantly, they reaffirm that all young people, communities, and nations must have the right to access the arts, not as luxuries, but as integral aspects of meaningful life.

This issue emerges at a time when arts educators, researchers, and practitioners across the world are being called to rethink their pedagogies, policies, and priorities in light of urgent global challenges. Climate instability, deepening inequality, technological acceleration, forced migration, cultural fragmentation, and social polarisation all place unprecedented pressures on education systems. Against this backdrop, arts education functions as a unique mode of response, one grounded in creativity, cultural memory, embodied intelligence, and collaborative problem-solving. The articles gathered here demonstrate how artists and educators are inventing new practices of care, critique, connection, and worldmaking in their everyday contexts. They show how global frameworks find life and meaning in local settings, and how local innovations, in turn, enrich global understandings of what arts education can be.

The adoption of the UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education invited UNESCO Member States to collectively commit to a shared international agenda that integrates culture and the arts across formal, non-formal, and informal education. The Framework recognises artistic and cultural learning as a matter of human rights, cultural rights, educational justice, and collective well-being. Its priorities of access, inclusion, sustainability, creativity, cultural diversity, and intersectoral collaboration are closely aligned with the values long upheld by the World Alliance for Arts Education.

What makes the Framework particularly significant is its insistence that arts education cannot remain isolated from the world's urgent challenges, and this is something we see in this issue of Invisibilidades. It explicitly positions culture and the arts as essential resources for climate action, peacebuilding, youth empowerment, gender equality, social cohesion, and cultural sustainability. It foregrounds the roles of artists, educators, cultural workers, and communities as co-creators of knowledge, rather than passive transmitters of tradition. It affirms artmaking pedagogies, values quality arts and cultural experiences and advocates for new ways of interacting ethically and imaginatively with our environments.

Across my work with WAAE, I have seen how the Framework has energised networks of educators and policymakers who were already striving to build stronger, more equitable systems. Its adoption has given international legitimacy to efforts that have long been happening on the ground, and it has opened new pathways for innovation, advocacy, and cross-border collaboration. This issue

of Invisibilidades contributes to that momentum by offering scholarship that exemplifies how arts education takes place in diverse contexts across the world.

Throughout these global developments, dance holds a unique and indispensable place. As a discipline rooted in the intelligence of the moving body, dance offers modes of learning that are sensory, relational, intuitive, and intercultural. It provides ways of understanding the world that cannot be accessed through text alone. Dance asks us to listen not only with our ears but with our weight, our breath, our timing, our capacity to attune to another person's movement. This embodied literacy is a powerful resource for education systems seeking to respond to the needs of young people today. Dance teaches negotiation, empathy, adaptability, presence, and trust. These skills are urgently needed in societies characterised by rapid change and uncertainty.

The connections between UNESCO's Framework, the 2025 Arts Education Week, and the scholarship presented in this issue invite us to consider a broader question: As arts educators, what futures are we committed to creating?

The arts give us tools for imagining beyond the constraints of the present. They help us navigate uncertainty by fostering adaptability, curiosity, and collaborative thinking. They cultivate the capacities needed to sustain democratic life, listening, interpreting, improvising, and engaging with difference. They enable us to rehearse possibilities, to practice courage, and to transform imagination into action. Dance teaches us how to move with and through complexity, how to inhabit vulnerability with agency, and how to reimagine our relationships with each other and with the world. It reminds us that knowledge does not live solely in texts or institutions but in bodies, gestures, rhythms, and shared experiences. As we look toward the future, the challenge before us is to ensure that arts education becomes not only more accessible but more deeply connected to the cultural, ecological, and social realities of our time. This requires partnerships across sectors, sustained advocacy, and the leadership of artists and educators who understand the transformative power of creative practice.

As I reflect on the work of the World Dance Alliance and the World Alliance for Arts Education, I am reminded that our global networks are strongest when we move together, across borders, disciplines, and perspectives. This issue stands as evidence of what becomes possible when we do so. I hope this special edition of Invisibilidades contributes meaningfully to the collective. May these articles inspire continued dialogue, critical inquiry, and a passionate arts education community. And may they strengthen our shared commitment to building educational systems that honour the arts as fundamental to human development, cultural vitality, and sustainable futures.

Drawing The Multifaceted Discourse of Drawing: Art in Childhood and Adolescence

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Abstract

This study aims to redefine the understanding of artistic expression among children and adolescents, particularly emphasizing the importance of non-traditional drawing practices within the context of Pakistani culture. It explores the multifaceted nature of drawing as a form of artistic expression through innovative image-making among children and adolescents in Pakistan, challenging prevailing adult-centric perspectives that equate artistic talent with the ability to produce realistic imagery. The research examines the mark-making practices of my daughter, Dia, revealing the significance of alternative forms of creativity that often go unrecognized in traditional educational frameworks.

The literature is organized into themes, including mark-making, the relationship between text and image, the role of dialogic symbols and meaning-making, realism, and drawing as a research tool. Through an autoethnographic approach, the study utilizes a purposive sample, focusing on Dia's artistic development over a span of ten years (ages 7 to 17), using both textual and visual data. Textual data comprises entries from my journal notes based on observations and informal conversations with Dia from ages 9 to 17, as well as Dia's own writings on her art-making documented in her diaries, for which prior consent was obtained. For visual data, Dia's artworks and my archival photographs of her artistic activities and play from ages 7 to 17 years were purposively selected.

Visual and thematic analyses were employed under themes such as creativity, self-

expression, emotional engagement, empowerment, non-verbal communication, and the exchange of ideas. The findings indicate that drawing transcends the conventional boundaries of representational visual mark-making, incorporating textual overlaps and interpretive emotional expressions that extend beyond a defined space, such as a sketchbook, a predefined art space, or a picture frame. Allowing these engagements within the artistic discourse empowers children to embrace their unique voices, highlighting the necessity for adults to broaden their understanding of the creative processes unique to children and youth. This research advocates for inclusive practices within art education that prioritize children's voices, positioning children's unique artistic expressions as valid and valuable contributions to the discourse on art.

Keywords: Drawing, artistic expression, creativity, self-expression, parental influence, collaborative experiences, observational studies, text and image, child-centered perspective, non-traditional drawing methods, emotional engagement, art education.

In Pakistan, a child's ability to produce realistic imagery is often equated with artistic talent, leading to those who struggle with this skill being perceived as lacking creativity (Iftikhar, 2020, p. 61). This paper argues that children and adolescents who do not engage in traditional drawing are overlooked and deemed unsuitable for art in academic and home settings. This adult-centric perception marginalizes genuine artistic engagement and stems from an evaluative framework that fails to acknowledge alternative forms of image-making. While successful drawings are valued for their technical skill, this focus neglects diverse drawing modalities that can convey emotional depth (Owens, 2014, p. 74). Reflecting on my own experiences in Pakistan I recall observing my daughter's mark-making during her early childhood. Initially, I interpreted her disinterest in traditional drawing as a lack of artistic engagement. However, upon deeper reflection, I realized that her mark-making represented a legitimate form of artistic expression that provided valuable insights into her inner world.

Introduction

This paper employs an autoethnographic approach to examine the act of drawing through the lens of my daughter's artworks. The drawing discourse is organized into themes such as mark-making, the interplay between text and image, dialogic symbols, configurational signs, and meaning-making. I question the conventional adult-centric perspective that emphasizes realism—often linked to artistically gifted children—and question the tendency to view drawings solely as research tools. Milbrath (1998) notes that artistically gifted children perceive visual information effectively by focusing on shapes rather than concepts, leveraging strong visual memories and attention to detail to refine their representations (as cited in Winner & Martino, 2000, pp. 95-96). While acknowledging the value of drawings as research tools (Theron, Mitchell, Smith, & Stuart, 2011; Guillemin, 2004; Springer et al., 2020), I argue that overemphasizing this function can constrain children's creative potential by imposing predetermined roles on their expressions of image-making.

Moreover, fostering observational and collaborative experiences between children

and their parents can enhance inclusivity in art-making. A child-centered perspective encourages innovative thinking about drawing and art, allowing it to serve as a vital mode of expression for children and adolescents who may not conform to conventional definitions of successful drawings and art.

My inclination towards this child-centered approach has been shaped by my extensive experience teaching art and design in Pakistan for the past 30 years. During this time, I have worked with adolescents in private schools preparing them for the O and A Level Cambridge International Examination Board of the UK. After completing my Bachelor's in Fine Arts at a university in the USA, I returned to Pakistan with a passion for teaching art that aligns with these principles. As both a visual artist and an art educator, I have observed innovative approaches to art engagement among my students, many of whom have successfully ventured into the arts as art critics, visual artists, art educators, and writers. Throughout my teaching career, I have documented and archived both my students' art-making processes and my own through journal notes, photography, and videography.

This extensive experience, however, took on a deeply personal dimension when I became a parent. Eighteen years ago, when I welcomed my only child, my daughter, Dia, I was excited to introduce her to the world of art from an early age. To my surprise, I found that she was apprehensive about certain art materials and processes, such as drawing and coloring, a tendency that persisted for several years. Additionally, I was taken aback by her secretive approach to art-making, especially from me, which continues to this day. This personal experience prompted me to reflect on whether there was something amiss with me as an educator or with Dia as a young artist.

Fortunately, my inclination as a keen observer and documenter facilitated an autoethnographic exploration of her artistic journey. Autoethnography is a method that combines elements of autobiography and ethnography (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2010). By photographically and textually recording everything relevant to her activities—whether in art, academics, or play—I unveiled not only her artistic evolution but also the emotional landscape accompanying our shared experiences. I was captivated by the immense creativity exhibited through consistent patterns over the years. However, in all these decades of teaching art, it became evident that Pakistani contemporary society shows preference for realism and representational art, leading many educators and parents to validate only such artworks from children. In contrast, Dia's beautiful non-representational pieces illuminated a significant misunderstanding regarding art and its interpretation. This perception often creates a barrier between children and their ability to express themselves fully, limiting the possibilities for growth due to the adult lens of approval.

Methodology

To analyze the observations in this study, I employed an autoethnographic approach, documenting various occurrences in my journal through text, photographs, and videos. Bochner (2016) states that truth relies on human intelligence, while facts do not. Ethical autoethnography allows researchers to explore multiple meanings in experiences, navigating a constantly evolving reality and fostering self-understanding (as cited in Wexler, 2025, p. 367). I

used two forms of data: textual and visual. The textual data consisted of informal conversations with Dia from ages 9 to 17 and my observational notes on her art-making processes from ages 7 to 17. This information was recorded in my journal, along with some text written by Dia about her artworks in her diaries, accessed with her consent.

For the visual data, I included her original artworks as well as my archival photographs of non-available original artworks, past activities, processes, play, and more. Through visual and thematic analysis, I explored themes such as creativity, self-expression, emotional engagement, empowerment, non-verbal communication, collaboration, and innovative ideation. This research has not only shed light on Dia's artistic journey through the discourse of drawings but has also provided insights into the broader relationship between childhood art-making and societal expectations.

Drawings as Mark-Making

According to Mathews (2004), children's semiotic development of symbols and signs extends into varying levels of representational expressions and communication discovered through infancy. This artistic development evolves from simple dabs and arcs to vigorous strokes, eventually leading to more complex shapes and actions as perceived by the children. Such sophisticated forms of communication may appear as abstractions to adults yet can transform into visual realism over time, although this development is not uniform for all children, as conventional theorists suggest (p. 260).

Emotions such as fear, excitement, hopefulness, anger, anxiety, and love—feelings that children may find challenging to express verbally—can be communicated effectively and spontaneously through drawings (Weng et al., 2024, p. 1). I have observed that even seemingly ordinary drawings often contain deeply engaging stories, full of meaningful symbols and signs created by children. It is important for parents and teachers to explore these expressions rather than dismiss them. As highlighted by Wilson and Wilson (2009), they pose the critical question, 'What is this?' (p. 110).

Interestingly, I noticed that my daughter never showed an interest in drawing and coloring during an age when most children are deeply engaged in these activities. This lack of interest led me to assume that she was not inclined towards art.

However, as Einarsdottir, Dockett, and Perry (2009) suggest, 'Not everyone likes to draw...' (pp. 229-230), this realization prompted a shift in my understanding of art, leading me to recognize that art is not as concrete as drawing is often perceived to be. Pearson (2001) argues that drawing can be seen as an innate biological process, a cultural construct, or both, leading to ongoing debates about children's artistic expression and existing knowledge gaps. The concept of a desirable theory often relies on the authority of historical research practices (p. 350).

Most people engage with art in various forms (see figure 1), but few choose to use traditional drawing as a means of communicating their ideas. This led me to contemplate the need to re-imagine, re-examine, and perhaps redefine the term 'drawing'. As Einarsdottir et al. (2009) point out, "Drawing is not a favored method of communication for all children but has been used by many..." (p. 229). Through these reflections, it becomes evident that exploring both verbal and non-verbal modes of expression can offer profound insights into a child's emotional world, enriching our understanding of their unique experiences and narratives.



Figure 1. Dia. Multiple Artworks and Play. Mixed media.

Kindler (2004) explores the stages of artistic development in children, which progress from basic scribbling to more intuitive and intention-driven creations. She contends that this development should not be defined solely by pictorial realism or technical skills (p. 233). While researchers such as Hagen, Willat, Piaget, and Luquet emphasize visual realism in children's art, others, including Arnheim, Golomb, and Darras, argue that children often create their own representations rather than merely focusing on replication (pp. 236-239).

To understand child art it is essential to recognize that children's scribbles, doodles, notes, text, and images—created at various ages during their daily lives at school and home—deserve more attention than they typically receive, especially from parents and art teachers. The margins of notebooks, small torn pieces of paper with writings, and symbols drawn by children, as well as those created during adolescence, are not random or insignificant; rather, they serve as breadcrumbs leading to significant ideas. These creations act as scaffolding for conceptual ideas and expressions that may later manifest in children's and adolescent's art.

Drawings as Text and Image

I remember an unusual experience with my daughter when she began communicating with me through little notes in her notebooks, books, sketchbooks, and diaries. Generally, children express a wide range of emotions—including anger, love, hate, remorse, happiness, frustration, need, demand, and apology—through spoken words or drawings. However, my daughter, both as a child and an adolescent, chose to express herself through tiny notes.

I noticed that her writings represented her internal struggles and perceptions of her surroundings. The type of paper or card she selected, the visual appearance of her texts, and even the choice of torn-edged paper to express anger contrasted sharply with the neatly cut, colorful paper adorned with hearts, which she used to communicate different feelings. She illustrated her emotions with drawings, such as a teardrop-laden face to signify sadness or a sunny smiley face surrounded by flowers to convey happiness. Additionally, her untidy writing and half-formed letters often expressed her unwillingness to comply, see figure 2.

'This is cutesy Dia'

'I'll put it up in my room'

'If it doesn't look like me, I'll just write a note next to it that this is Dia'

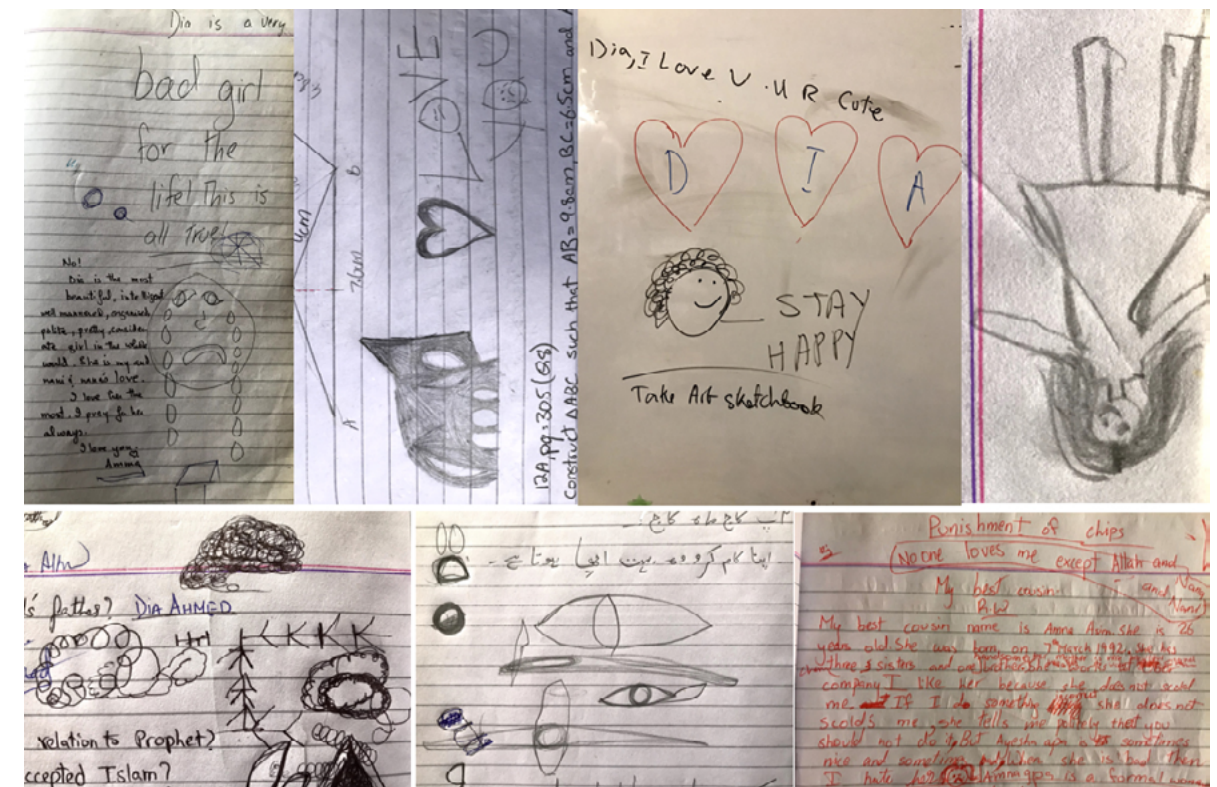


Figure 2. Dia. Multiple texts & doodles on notebooks.

I never insisted that she draw for me; I considered those little notes as precious pieces of communication and expression, akin to drawings. I wanted to minimize my control and interference in her method of expression and communication. Einarsdottir et al. (2009) suggest that "children have some control over what they draw and what they say, and they exercise this control. Our response is that such action is their right" (p. 230). These researchers point out the importance of recognizing the right of children to exercise control, which many educators and parents often overlook through authoritative methods, such as telling children to change a color or remove/add elements to a composition according to adult aesthetics or and an examiner's liking. Encouraging children's self-directed drawings and narratives relies on the teacher's or researcher's ability to build empathic relationships in a supportive environment (Rudolph & Wright, 2015, p. 505).

In Dia's artwork, the integration of text with images conveys emotions and it ultimately transforms into the image itself. This development blurs the clear distinction between text and visuals, entering a conceptual visual realm characterized by ideas. According to Iftikhar (2024), in her journal, Dia reflected on one of her paintings titled 'Garden of Peace' (Figure 3) She wrote:

The flowers with lights (pencil sharpening) are glowing and shining. The portion at the end is the soil (painted with copper acrylic) on which is written Dia, which means light, so that is why everything in this 'painting of peace' is glowing and shining. (p. 355)

As Ross (2014) states, when readers or viewers lack knowledge of a written or pictorial language, images may be misconstrued as writing, and vice versa. She

echoes James Elkins's (1998) question: "How do we know when we are looking at writing and not at pictures?" (p. 92). In the aforementioned painting, Dia's name becomes the focal point, serving as both text and image symbolizing light. Also view figure 4.



Figure 3. Dia. Garden of Peace. Mixed media on board.
Figure 4. Dia. 'Artist'. Acrylic on canvas.

Wright (2010) suggests that "intratextuality involves internal relations within text" (p. 55). For Dia, the concept of intratextuality during early adolescence became increasingly engaged with the idea that text could evolve into an image, emphasizing aspects such as color, material, medium, and expression rather than serving merely as a support for the visual, see figure 5. The text transformed into the idea itself rather than just a form of communication (Figure 6). Ross (2014) also notes that Baldessari's word-based visual artworks challenge and interrogate "the very nature of visual art by using words alone" (p. 114).



Figure 5. Dia. Acrylic on canvas.



Figure 6. Dia. Mixed media on canvas.

If art is allowed to demonstrate the tangibility found in the rigid conformity of text, image, and idea, then it enriches the landscape of art and thought through the works of artists like Davis, Peto, Lichtenstein, Wiley, Johns, Magritte, Picasso, Carra, and others. This perspective should also be reflected and embraced within the existing education system and home environments. According to Ross (2014), Magritte's exploration of the relationship between visual and verbal elements—through 'enigmatic text and pseudoscripts' that combine pictures and words—along with Max Ernst's concept of 'mysterious picture writings,' suggests that words and images should not be viewed as separate communication systems (p. 92). Zarina Hashmi asserts, 'My work is about writing' (Tate, 2013). See figure 7.

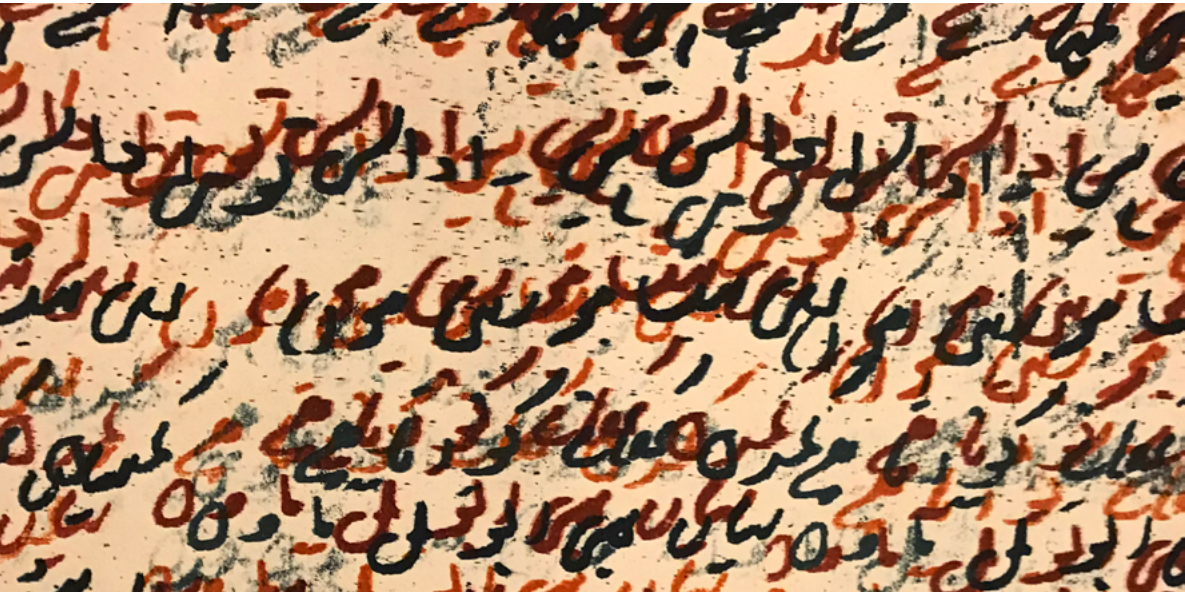


Figure 7. Nausheen Iftikhar. My Mother's Letters. (Detail). Screenprint on handmade paper.

The educational framework often emphasizes literacy, placing a strong focus on the written word and text. In contrast, visual arts typically prioritize visuals alone. However, through art, children can express their ideas and make connections in ways that often exceed their verbal or written communication skills (Rudolph & Wright, 2015, p. 504). A more inclusive approach can combine text with various materials, broadening the range of what can be considered valuable imagery. By allowing children the freedom to explore different mediums—such as drawing, painting, writing, tactile materials, and construction methods—educators can encourage the creation of unique and unconventional art. This approach enhances children's ability to find meaning, express themselves, and effectively communicate their ideas. Ross (2014) highlights that viewers need to actively engage in interpreting the intricate verbal and visual languages used by artists like Stuart Davis and William T. Wiley to grasp the complex messages embedded in their works (pp. 75-76). This perspective should strongly resonate with art educators, parents, and researchers committed to children's art and art education, especially in developing countries. Written words, in the form of phrases and sentences, can be viewed as small pieces of drawings. According to Dyson (1986), children at a young age engage in 'symbol weaving' because they cannot easily distinguish between drawing and writing (as cited in Anning & Ring, 2004, p. 5). Their creations carry significant ideas that are not solely represented by text or visuals but should be understood as a coherent

whole. For instance according to Iftikhar (2020), this perception was enhanced by including Pakistan's flag and family names: 'na' for 'nana' [maternal grandfather in Urdu], 'ni' for 'nani' [maternal grandmother in Urdu], 'ma' for 'mama', with her name 'Dia' prominently at the center (p. 66) in her painting 'Masjid-e-Nabvi', see figure 8.



Figure 8. Dia. Masjid-e-Nabvi-(detail). Acrylic on paper.

In my observations of my daughter during her formative years, I noticed that when she was given the freedom to engage in graphic representation without adult-imposed standards at home, she produced visual artwork that reflected her personal interpretations. She utilized a variety of materials, including text, pictures, and colors in her creations. Although she did not particularly enjoy traditional drawing, these early graphic representations evolved into artwork that was both distinctive and meaningful, as shown in figure 9. This work illustrates a unique approach that transcends conventional art-making.



Figure 9. Dia. Multiple artworks. Mixed media.

Drawings as What is Art?

I used to view my daughter's casual drawings as important forms of communication. However, after researching children's art, I began to appreciate these creations in a broader context, recognizing them as meaningful expressions rather than just written words. Over the years, as I observed her doodles evolve into significant artwork, I found myself reflecting on my own assumptions as both an art educator and a parent. I began to ponder what defines a drawing and what constitutes art. As Pearson (2001) asks, "Why do children not draw?" (p. 359), I wondered if they actually do draw, but perhaps their art is not understood within the framework of an adult's perception of drawing. Ross (2014) references Irving Sandler (1996) when he asks,

What is painting? What is art? What is non-art? What are ideas? What is visual, what is verbal, and what is the difference? Can verbal information constitute a visual image? Where is the art—in the idea or the object? (p. 114)

These questions have sparked ongoing debates within contemporary visual arts, which still seeks relevance in both formal and informal art education.

If art is allowed to showcase tangible qualities within the structured boundaries of the professional art world, then this richness should also be reflected in our education system. There is often curiosity surrounding the misunderstanding of original art students whose work doesn't conform to established norms or engage with the traditional canon (Rohr, 2013, p. 18). A paradigm shift is necessary for parents, teachers, and researchers to recognize and embrace creativity, expressiveness, and meaning-making through contextual understanding in children's art.

We need to reevaluate the acceptance and rejection that are often influenced by adult perspectives and a longing for realism in art. As Unsworth (1992) references Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) who assert that art holds more potential for children's development than is commonly acknowledged for which we must move away from traditional views and stop promoting what adults prefer; otherwise, we will continue to marginalize art education in schools (p. 68).

Drawing as a Research Tool

Drawing has proven to be a valuable tool in psychological research for studying cognition, offering insights that range from realistic perceptions to abstract cognitive reflections (Bainbridge, Chamberlain, Wammes & Fan, 2025, p. 2). In this context, Duncum (2018) notes that children's drawings were first systematically studied in the late 19th century. However, he highlights that Wilson and Wilson (1981) identified significant flaws in the Stage-by-Age models, which, despite their considerable impact on art education, tend to emphasize figural accuracy and spatial arrangement while often overlooking narrative content, themes, and children's intentions (pp. 224-225).

Moreover, Ivashkevich (2009) explains that children's drawings, whether initiated by the children themselves or prompted by adults, have been extensively studied, leading to two main research paths. Firstly, the first path focuses on using these insights to develop effective educational interventions. Secondly, the second path examines children's drawings as a form of artistic expression, analyzing them through their aesthetic and formal qualities (p. 51).

Furthermore, the significance of drawing goes beyond mere artistry as Pearson (2001) argues that different perspectives on drawing are shaped by its relevance to science and education in research, thereby emphasizing what drawing can reveal about children rather than the drawings themselves (p. 351). In addition, Duncum (2001) emphasizes that the meaning of a child's drawing is not solely determined by the image itself. Rather, it is influenced by the surrounding sociocultural context, including interactions with peers and adults, as well as influences from visual and popular culture. Consequently, this leads to various interpretations of the artwork (as cited in Ivashkevich, 2009, p. 52).

Drawings as The Realm of Realism

The spontaneous expressiveness and communication of ideas are meaningful for children. This can be achieved through organized and conventional methods such as drawing, writing essays, painting, creating 3D constructions, or verbal communication. Additionally, children express themselves through patterned yet unconventional means, like marks, text, or small images on paper, notebooks, whiteboards, sidewalks, or any other forms that adults may not yet understand. Our understanding of drawing development has changed over time. Instead of viewing it as a universal and linear progression toward realism, we now recognize that development is nonlinear and influenced by sociocultural factors, as well as individual differences in learning styles and experiences (Ivashkevich, 2009, p. 51). In my thirty years of experience in art education, I have observed that both adolescents and children often strive to achieve visual realism in their drawings and artwork. This suggests that we have made limited progress in embracing non-linear drawing styles, which in turn restricts the discourse around drawing and excludes those children and adolescents who do not conform to traditional representation practices. The lack of traditional drawing among children does not indicate an absence of meaning-making; rather, they may create in ways that diverge from conventional definitions of drawing.

According to Kindler (2004), artistic development is no longer defined solely by pictorial realism, technical proficiency, complexity, elaboration, or form-oriented artifacts (p. 233). My daughter, Dia, has never been particularly fond of drawing or coloring, especially in a realistic style, throughout her childhood and into her adolescence. When people ask me to discuss her art, I often find myself at a loss for how to understand and respond to their questions. The art she creates does not conform to the traditional standards for child and adolescent art. However, she aspires to be an artist and truly feels like one, despite her unconventional style and strong artistic abilities, which are grounded in her innovative ideas and unique material choices.

According to Golomb (1994), findings by theorists suggest that a child's mind operates through constructive interpretations of what they see, revealing diverse representational styles. This challenges the traditional belief, rooted in Piaget's theories, that children's representational skills are linear and limited (p. 16).

As a mother and an art educator, I intuitively recognized Dia's expressiveness, conceptual ideas, preferences, and creativity, which extend beyond the defined traditional norms. However, I sometimes struggle to articulate this understanding. Dia constantly engages in unstructured writings paired with visual symbols, creates paintings devoid of concrete objects, and utilizes play and other multimodal

constructions to express herself.

Art provides immense possibilities like learning, understanding, engaging, creating, and joy. Observing children as they draw in unconventional ways provide us with insight about both them and us. I witness immense creativity and energy in children's mark-making and bodily gestures—similar to Hayashi's and Tobin's (2015) concept of heterocorporeal dialogue (as cited in Rech Penn, 2019, p. 105)—as they engage in acts of art and creation. Unfortunately in Pakistani schools and homes, this creativity diminishes when viewed through the limited lens of standardized structured art education, which comes with a long list of restrictions, focusing more on what not to do rather than encouraging creativity, gearing towards producing accurate representations of objects or people. Additionally, art may be undervalued when parents or elders prefer children's artwork that leans towards realism. Non-realistic pieces may be viewed as mere playful expressions (Iftikhar, 2020, p. 61).

A paradigm shift may help parents, teachers, and researchers recognize a wider range of creativity, expressiveness, and meaning-making in children's and adolescents' art. This can be achieved through a more open-ended understanding of form, material, and context. Goodman (1969) views image representation in art as interpretive rather than merely imitative (as cited in Golomb, 1994, p. 18). The established norms that determine what constitutes drawing or art—shaped by adult perceptions and expectations of realism—need to be reassessed.

Drawing as Meaning-Making: 'Dialogic Symbolism' and Configurational Signs

The process of meaning-making in a child's visual narrative is more significant than previously acknowledged by psychologists and researchers. Wright (2010) highlights that the theories of Vygotsky (1962, 1967) and Bruner (1996) on social constructivism, combined with Danesi's (2007) concept of indexical elaboration in children's art and Chandler's (2002) insights on polyvocality in children's expressions, significantly enhance our comprehension of how children create meaning through their artistic endeavors (pp. 26-40). This understanding is further enriched by the active dialogue fostered by art educators or adults who engage with children about their creations. The role of an interlocutor is vital for uncovering the meaningful imagery present in both children's and adolescents' art. Greene and Hogan argue that adolescent art, along with discussions concerning it, offers a window into the meanings and myriad associations that young people encounter. This dialogue reveals intricate and often unknowable aspects of their environments and influences (as cited by Thompson, 2017, p. 14). In Wright (2010), Golomb (1988) describes children's art as a dialogic symbolism of reality, whereas Kellman (1995) argues that children's image creation offers insights into how children perceive the world around them (pp. 17-18). As Lackey (2021) suggests, children's image creation is more about sharing their experiences than simply creating representations of reality or engaging in process-oriented activities (Lara Lackey, Personal communication, October 9, 2021).

I believe that children's unique interpretations of their reality, shaped by their personal experiences, are essential and deserve to be depicted in their visual narratives as symbolized dialogues. For instance, Dia's experiences with me as her mother and her perceptions of our relationship were expressed through

various mediums, such as handwritten notes, birthday cards, framed artwork, and our portrait. This journey emphasizes the importance of symbolized dialogue over time. While it may be easy to overlook the significance of one or two pieces of children's artwork, viewing them as part of a larger pattern reveals a continuous and powerful art-making process that results in meaningful dialogues between adults and children.

A portrait painted by Dia of herself and me reflected her perspective rather than my perception of her or how she wanted others to view our relationship. It was solely about how she perceives me as a mother with her in our portrait and life. According to Diket (2003), "From highly engaging, stimulating, and thoughtful encounters with art, students [adolescents] initiate and sustain interest in art as a mode of personal expression and an enduring venue for creativity" (p. 175). I was particularly intrigued by Gallas's (1994) observation that children's ideas and themes unfold as their thinking evolves, which may not follow a sequential order (as cited in Wright, 2010, p. 18). As adults, we often expect a linear progression and gradual development, while children's thinking processes can be quite different. Children build knowledge from a graphic base through multimodal meaning-making, narrative construction, and explanatory metaphor (Rudolph & Wright, 2015, p. 504). For example, I tend to plan extensively, think deeply about what I want to create, and prepare thoroughly before executing an idea visually. In contrast, I observe that my daughter and several children in my class engage in contemplation and problem-solving during the art-making process itself. They frequently adjust their choices—changing colors, overlapping elements, incorporating new objects, or removing parts—taking their ideas in new directions as they create, see figure 10.

According to Wright (2010), the loosely structured use of configurational signs in art, when intertwined with storytelling, gestures, and role-playing, offers boundless opportunities for symbolic communication (p. 22). In our portrait painted and drawn by Dia, I noticed that she exaggerated the size of our lips and smiles to emphasize happiness. For her, details like our hairstyles, the thickness of our eyebrows, and the direction of our gazes held significant meaning. The dot pattern on our matching shirts became a symbol of love. Additionally, the prominent circles representing my cheeks highlighted my chubby features, while the attention given to my ears accentuated the jewelry I was wearing, see figure 11.

In expressing her affection, Dia included the text 'Two love/heart Loves,' which served as a clear declaration of love and a form of 'symbol weaving.' Through art, children not only learn to harness the power of signs but also express their identities and forge connections with the surrounding world, all while creating imaginative realm (Wright, 2010, p. 23) much like what Dia did through our portraits in figure 11. This evolution in expression can be contextualized within Peirce's semiotic theory, suggesting that the icons and symbols created by children, adolescents, and adults can be viewed as vibrant systems of 'dynamic signs,' each carrying specific interpretations (Kindler & Darras, 1997; 1997b; 1998, as cited in Kindler, 2004, pp. 239-240).



Figure 10. Dia. Multiple portraits of herself with me.

Reflecting on Dia's painting titled 'Boat in the Sea,' (figure 11) which incorporates configurational signs, polyvocality, and indexical signs, I engaged in a thought-provoking dialogue with her about the artwork. She shared her narrative that the dark and scary sky depicted in her painting was a reflection of a violent storm, resulting in the tragic drowning of all the passengers in the boat. This conversation made me realize how metaphorical expressions often become increasingly prevalent during adolescence, revealing deeper emotional undercurrents (Picard & Gauthier, 2012, p. 6).

Moreover, employing a dialogic pedagogical framework can significantly enhance agency for both teachers and students, thereby fostering a more democratic educational environment (Garcia-Lazo, 2022, p. 19). It is essential for adults—be they parents, teachers, researchers, theorists, or psychologists—to broaden their perspectives on children's art. By recognizing the unique ways in which children think and express their feelings, we can uncover a wealth of undiscovered treasures in their joyful imagery, visual expression, and innovative ideas (Iftikhar, 2020, p. 66). While a child's drawing may appear charming or skillful from an adult's perspective, it should never be judged by adult standards; its true value extends far beyond what adults can perceive (Goodman, 2018, p. 31).



Figure 11. Dia. Boat in the Sea. Acrylic on canvas.

Egan (1997) observes that children between the ages of 7 and 14 utilize romantic understanding to interpret the world, with a desire for philosophical understanding beginning to emerge around age 14 (as cited in Manifold, 2021, p. 32). This transition is evident in Dia's description of her painting. I believe that restricting children's ability to fully express their thoughts through graphic narratives limits their freedom to communicate effectively. Over-intervention can hinder the fluidity of their expression, causing them to lose the excitement and freedom they once experienced in drawing and storytelling. I was particularly struck by Wilson's (1974) observation, where he compares the spontaneous art created by children on scraps of paper to a "whole world of excitement" unfolding (p. 3).

Conclusion

The exploration of drawing as a multifaceted discourse within the context of childhood and adolescence reveal a significant gap in our ability to evaluate artistic growth. As societal, cultural, and individual experiences evolve, the pursuit of an effective evaluation criteria becomes increasingly complex. While we can strive to refine our understanding and mitigate the risk of flawed assessments of artistic development through thoughtful deductive methods, a definitive standard remains elusive.

The artistic journey of children, exemplified by Dia's artistic growth from childhood to adolescence, highlights the transformative power of creative expression in shaping identity through drawing. Her transition from using torn papers and text to confidently wielding a paintbrush as a painter epitomizes her developing artistic identity and her unique means of communication, diverging from conventional pathways in art. Art, especially drawing, may play a role in children's development by allowing them to express their identities and share their unique perspectives and emotions joyfully. Unfortunately, certain practices can hinder this expression by promoting conformity and suppressing individuality (Goodman, 2018, pp. 172-173). As an art educator, I have often observed these stifling practices, which include rigid educational curricula that prioritize standardized outcomes, an excessive focus on perfection that discourages experimentation, competitive environments that put children against each other, limited creative choices, and negative feedback that undermines confidence. Often enforced by parents and educators, these approaches can significantly suppress children's creativity and self-expression.

Conventional definitions of drawing and artistic processes often prove too restrictive, overlooking the vast array of experiences that encompass both children and adults. As art educators, parents, curriculum designers, and researchers, we often evaluate from an adult-centered perspective, which can inadvertently reinforce the status quo. This may lead to a situation where some children feel they must conform to established criteria, while many others do not fit these molds. Labeling the majority as uncreative, untalented, or unsuitable for artistic engagement can create a restrictive mindset that may hinder children's spontaneous artistic expression. This perspective likely contributes to the increasing disengagement of young people from adult-led art activities, which is reflected in the decline of enrollment in art programs and the closure of formal school art initiatives. In contrast, this trend highlights the rise of vibrant, peer-driven informal art activities that are flourishing.

Throughout my teaching experiences, I have witnessed the profound comfort and fluency with which children engage in artistic discourse, discussing one another's creations as if sharing a unique communal language. Rarely do they engage in harsh criticism or impose rigid standards of realism; instead, they interpret their art through the lens of their personal experiences and perspectives. This observation underscores the urgent need for adults—including parents, teachers, researchers, theorists, and psychologists—to expand their understanding of the artistic discourse that children navigate. By shifting our focus to effectively observe and appreciate children's artistic thinking and expression, we might unlock invaluable insights into the rich and dynamic world of creativity that defines the artistic journey of youth. In recognizing this, we might fully embrace the complexity of drawing as both an individual and collective experience during childhood and adolescence.

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Flourishing in Rural Classrooms: Empowering “Left-Behind” Children and Teachers in China through Drama Education

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Abstract

This paper examines how drama education can advance educational equity and well-being for “left-behind children” and their teachers in rural China. Drawing on the PERMA framework of positive psychology and grounded in the principles of drama education, the study investigates how creative, participatory learning environments foster engagement, resilience, and a renewed sense of meaning in schooling. Employing a mixed-methods design, this study combined pre- and post-intervention PERMA-based surveys and focus group discussions with students ($n = 121$), along with in-depth interviews and classroom observations involving teachers ($n = 15$) across three rural schools in Guangxi Province, China. Quantitative analyses revealed statistically significant gains across all five PERMA dimensions, with the largest effects in Accomplishment (Cohen’s $d = 0.70$) as well as Relationships and Positive Emotions (Cohen’s $d = 0.63$). Qualitative findings illuminated the mechanisms behind these changes, showing how drama pedagogy enabled emotional expression, peer empathy, and teacher–student trust. The results demonstrate that drama-based pedagogies, when culturally and contextually adapted, can serve as a sustainable approach to strengthening both student and teacher flourishing in under-resourced communities. The study concludes by framing this model within a continuous improvement perspective, emphasizing iterative cycles of reflection, adaptation, and shared learning as essential to educational transformation in rural contexts.

Keywords: drama education, well-being, PERMA model, rural education, teacher development, educational equity, positive psychology, student engagement, social-emotional learning (SEL), arts-based pedagogy

Introduction & Context

Across China’s vast rural landscape, education remains both a lifeline and a challenge. Despite the nation’s rapid economic growth and impressive strides in educational access, persistent disparities continue to affect millions of children who grow up separated from their parents due to labour migration. Recent estimates by UNICEF and the National Bureau of Statistics of China indicate that more than 41 million rural children in China are classified as “left-behind” — meaning they grow up apart from one or both migrant parents. The total number of left-behind children across all regions may approach 67 million, making it one of the largest child populations in the world living without direct parental care. While many of these children are cared for by grandparents or relatives, research has highlighted significant risks to their emotional well-being, development, and academic motivation. Scholars have increasingly described this as a “silent crisis” in rural education and social protection (Wang & Lin, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). Educational inequities in rural China are not merely material or infrastructural—they are deeply psychosocial. While government reforms have improved physical facilities and reduced class sizes, rural schools still struggle with low student engagement, high absenteeism, and teacher burnout (Li & Huang, 2022). Many students experience a sense of alienation and purposelessness, while teachers face social isolation and limited professional growth opportunities. The result is a widening gap not only in academic achievement but in the quality of educational experience—what the OECD (2022) calls the “well-being gap” in global learning. It is within this context that arts-based and drama education approaches are emerging as transformative responses to the complex interplay between learning, emotion, and community.

The Rural Schools Drama Education Initiative, launched in collaboration with local education authorities, cultural foundations, and teacher-training institutions, represents a long-term, practice-based intervention aimed at addressing this multidimensional challenge. Since 2018, the program has reached over 100 schools across Guangxi, Guangdong, and Yunnan provinces, serving thousands of rural students and training hundreds of teachers. The initiative introduces drama education as well as drama-in-education (DiE) pedagogy—a methodology that uses improvisation, role-play, and embodied learning to promote empathy, imagination, and critical reflection in both students and teachers. Rather than treating drama as a performance art, the program positions it as a pedagogical strategy for re-humanizing classrooms, deepening engagement, and nurturing both academic and emotional growth.

Globally, research supports the transformative potential of arts-based pedagogies in advancing educational equity and well-being. Studies from UNESCO’s Arts Education Monitoring Group (2021) and the OECD’s Learning Compass 2030 framework (2022) highlight how arts-integrated learning fosters creativity, resilience, and belonging—skills that traditional lecture-based methods often fail to cultivate. Within China, however, arts education remains unevenly distributed and often marginalized in rural curricula. The Rural Schools Drama Education Initiative

thus fills a critical gap by integrating positive psychology—particularly Seligman's (2011) PERMA model of well-being—into a culturally responsive arts pedagogy that values both cognitive and emotional learning.

The PERMA framework—comprising Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment—provides a comprehensive lens for understanding and measuring human flourishing. In education, it has been increasingly adopted as a framework for promoting not only academic success but holistic well-being (Kern et al., 2015; Norrish, 2015). However, while PERMA-based interventions have been studied extensively in Western and urban contexts, there is limited empirical research examining their implementation in rural and collectivist settings, particularly where socioeconomic stressors and emotional neglect may inhibit students' sense of agency and joy. This study responds to that gap by investigating how the PERMA framework, when combined with drama-based learning, can foster both student and teacher well-being within under-resourced rural schools.

Drama education offers a distinctive advantage in this context because it translates psychological constructs into lived experience. Through role-play and dramatic tension, students explore emotions, relationships, and moral dilemmas that parallel their real-life challenges. Teachers, meanwhile, rediscover their creative agency and reconnect with their original sense of purpose in education. This dual transformation aligns closely with the twofold aim of the initiative: to empower students' sense of belonging and intrinsic motivation, and to restore teachers' professional vitality through creative practice and shared meaning-making. In this way, drama becomes both a pedagogical tool and a social innovation—a bridge between policy and practice, between individual well-being and systemic change.

At the policy level, this work aligns with China's 14th Five-Year Plan for Education Modernization (2021–2025), which emphasizes moral education, creative learning, and emotional well-being as integral components of quality education. It also resonates with UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) goals, particularly Target 4.7, which calls for education that promotes sustainable lifestyles, human rights, and cultural diversity. By situating the Rural Schools Drama Education Initiative within these global and national frameworks, this study positions drama education not merely as an extracurricular enrichment but as a strategic pathway toward educational equity, social-emotional learning, and community renewal.

The empirical investigation presented in this paper draws upon both quantitative and qualitative data collected from 121 students and 15 teachers participating in the year-long drama education program. Using a mixed-methods design, the study examines how teachers' and students' experiences of well-being evolved across the five dimensions of PERMA and how drama-based pedagogy functioned as a catalyst for change. Quantitative measures assessed shifts in self-reported engagement, relationships, and accomplishment, while qualitative interviews and classroom observations captured the nuanced, affective transformations that numbers alone cannot reveal. Together, these complementary methods illuminate the interplay between systemic constraints and human flourishing in rural educational environments.

The context of rural China thus provides both urgency and opportunity for this

inquiry. Urgency, because the emotional disengagement of left-behind children and the exhaustion of rural teachers threaten the moral fabric of education; opportunity, because the arts—when grounded in evidence-based frameworks like PERMA—can reimagine what education can mean for both teachers and students. This study, therefore, is not merely about drama education as a teaching method, but about the restoration of meaning, connection, and humanity in schooling systems that have long been shaped by exam pressures and structural inequities. By bridging the domains of positive psychology, drama pedagogy, and rural education reform, this research contributes to a growing movement that sees the arts as essential infrastructure for human development. It offers a model for how interdisciplinary, practice-based approaches can respond to complex educational inequities in culturally grounded ways—turning the classroom into a living laboratory for hope, empathy, and transformation.

Theoretical Framework

1. Positive Psychology and the PERMA Framework in Education

The theoretical foundation of this study lies in the intersection of positive psychology, drama education, and educational equity. Positive psychology, pioneered by Martin Seligman (2011), represents a paradigm shift in psychological science—from emphasizing pathology and deficits to cultivating human flourishing. In education, this evolution gave rise to positive education, a field that integrates well-being science with pedagogy to foster both academic success and life satisfaction (Norrish, 2015; Seligman et al., 2009). Rather than treating well-being as peripheral to learning, positive education proposes that flourishing students learn more deeply, as they experience emotional safety, meaning, and belonging. The PERMA model—comprising Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment—offers a multidimensional framework for understanding and nurturing well-being. Each domain represents a distinct yet interdependent component of flourishing that can be intentionally cultivated through educational design:

- Positive Emotion involves joy, gratitude, hope, and interest that broaden learners' perspectives and build psychological resources (Fredrickson, 2001). In classrooms, it appears as curiosity, humor, and pride in achievement.
- Engagement refers to the immersive state of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) in which learners are so absorbed in an activity that time and self-consciousness recede. It predicts intrinsic motivation and persistence.
- Relationships capture the importance of connection, empathy, and trust—central to belonging and to every collaborative learning environment.
- Meaning points to the sense of purpose and connection to something larger—be it community, cultural identity, or moral values—that transforms compliance into commitment.
- Accomplishment encompasses both mastery and growth, recognizing not only performance outcomes but also self-efficacy and resilience.

In the context of rural Chinese education, the PERMA framework offers a valuable lens for addressing psychosocial inequities but also requires cultural adaptation. In collectivist societies, well-being is experienced relationally rather than individually; thus, Relationships and Meaning often form the foundation from which Positive Emotion, Engagement, and Accomplishment emerge (Tian & Zheng, 2020). For

left-behind children, whose emotional worlds are shaped by separation and loss, relational repair—through trust, empathy, and belonging—is essential. Likewise, rural teachers, who often face social isolation and limited support, rediscover purpose and vitality through re-engagement with community and meaning. Accordingly, PERMA in this study functions as a dynamic relational framework, not a static checklist. It captures how well-being is co-constructed through experience and interaction. This dynamic orientation becomes especially powerful when integrated with drama education, which transforms psychological principles into embodied learning and shared creative experience.

2. Drama Education: From Aesthetic Experience to Human Development

Drama Education offers a complementary and synergistic framework for realizing well-being in practice. Rooted in the pioneering work of Dorothy Heathcote (1984), Gavin Bolton (1998), and subsequent practitioners such as Jonothan Neelands (2009) and Joe Winston (2013), drama education positions dramatic activity as both artistic and pedagogical inquiry. It invites learners to engage cognitively, emotionally, and socially by entering imagined contexts that reflect real human dilemmas. Through this process, drama enables participants to explore identity, ethics, empathy, and agency in ways that traditional didactic instruction cannot.

Heathcote’s “mantle of the expert” model empowers students to assume meaningful roles within fictional worlds, encouraging responsibility and collaborative problem-solving. Bolton (1998) framed drama as a reflective art form—an arena where emotion and cognition converge to construct understanding through tension and resolution. Likewise, Augusto Boal’s (1979) Theatre of the Oppressed situates drama as a tool for social transformation, offering participants the chance to rehearse strategies for real-world change. Across these traditions, drama education is unified by the principle of learning through experience. It embodies what Vygotsky (1978) described as the imaginative reconstruction of experience, a process central to creative cognition and moral growth. By combining thinking, feeling, and doing, drama creates conditions for deep learning—learning that is embodied, affective, and transformative.

In China’s rural classrooms, where pedagogy often prioritizes correctness over creativity, drama introduces a participatory and humanistic alternative. In the Chinese context, drama education has emerged unevenly but is gaining traction within both urban and rural pedagogical reform. Scholars have documented experimental and pilot programs—particularly in southwestern provinces such as Yunnan—where drama-in-education (DiE) practices have been used to enhance emotional engagement, intercultural understanding, and student voice (Sun, 2017; Zhao, 2020). By shifting the classroom dynamic, drama democratizes relationships, gives voice to students who are often marginalized, and redefines the teacher’s role from authoritative instructor to collaborative facilitator. This pedagogical shift aligns with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which identifies autonomy, competence, and relatedness as core psychological needs that underpin intrinsic motivation and well-being. Drama naturally engages all three: learners experience autonomy through choice and improvisation, competence through expressive skill-building, and relatedness through

ensemble-based collaboration. Moreover, drama education operationalizes each PERMA domain in the lived experience of the classroom:

- Positive Emotion through humor, imagination, and creative play.
- Engagement through the deep absorption of role and narrative.
- Relationships through ensemble trust and empathy.
- Meaning through exploring moral, cultural, or social questions.
- Accomplishment through visible progress in confidence,

collaboration, and creativity.

Thus, drama serves not merely as an instructional method but as an affective ecology—a space where emotions, cognition, and relationships converge to support well-being and learning simultaneously.

3. Integrating PERMA and Drama Education: A Holistic Framework for Flourishing

When PERMA and Drama Education are integrated, they create a holistic model of flourishing that bridges psychology, pedagogy, and culture. PERMA provides the theoretical architecture of well-being; drama provides the experiential pathway through which it is enacted. Together, they transform classrooms into relational ecosystems where emotion, imagination, and learning intertwine.

In this integrated framework:

- Positive Emotion arises through creative risk-taking and the joy of co-creation.
- Engagement develops as students and teachers inhabit narrative worlds requiring focus, empathy, and problem-solving.
- Relationships deepen through shared vulnerability and collaboration.
- Meaning emerges from connecting personal and communal stories to broader social realities.
- Accomplishment becomes both individual and collective—students and teachers witnessing tangible growth in voice, confidence, and agency.

Drama education operationalizes the PERMA framework in educational settings, providing embodied pathways to each dimension of well-being:

PERMA Dimension	Drama Education Expression	Illustrative Example in Rural Context
Positive Emotion	Shared laughter, emotional expression through role play	Students experience joy and release during collaborative improvisations
Engagement	Deep focus during character creation and dramatic inquiry	Learners sustain concentration and “flow” during scene-making
Relationships	Collaborative storytelling, empathy-building, ensemble work	Students strengthen trust and peer support through co-created drama
Meaning	Exploration of moral dilemmas and social issues through narrative	Students connect classroom themes to community experiences
Accomplishment	Performing and reflecting on learning outcomes	Students recognize growth through self and peer feedback after performances

Within the Rural Schools Drama Education Initiative, each domain is intentionally designed into workshop and classroom practice. For instance, Positive Emotion might be cultivated through storytelling that celebrates local culture; Engagement through improvisation that invites multiple solutions; Relationships through collective performance-making; Meaning through dramatized inquiry into village life or intergenerational care; and Accomplishment through reflective sharing circles that affirm progress and gratitude.

This cyclical pedagogy aligns with Improvement Science and Action Research principles, creating feedback loops of observation, reflection, and adaptation. It also resonates with Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build Theory, which posits that positive emotions expand awareness and build enduring psychological and social resources. Drama provides the embodied means for this broadening process—engaging body, mind, and heart to reframe challenges as opportunities for creative action.

Crucially, the model acknowledges teacher flourishing as parallel and interdependent with student flourishing. Teachers who engage in drama-based professional learning reconnect with creativity and purpose, rediscovering the joy of teaching as relational art. Their emotional renewal, in turn, shapes classroom climates conducive to curiosity and belonging. This reflects evidence that teacher well-being profoundly influences student outcomes and school culture (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

From a systemic perspective, this integrated framework operates across three levels:

- Micro level (individual):

Students and teachers cultivate self-awareness, confidence, and joy.

- Meso level (classroom):

Relationships, collaboration, and collective efficacy strengthen.

- Macro level (community):

Shared meaning and cultural pride emerge, reinforcing resilience and local identity.

4. Conceptual Synthesis

The fusion of Positive Psychology and Drama Education redefines well-being as a lived, performative, and relational process rather than a static psychological condition. It emphasizes that flourishing is enacted—not merely felt—through creative participation, dialogue, and reflection.

The Rural Schools Drama Education Initiative thus operationalizes PERMA in culturally grounded, emotionally resonant, and pedagogically sustainable ways. It demonstrates how drama education can serve as a catalyst for systemic equity and human flourishing, transforming not only how rural children learn but how teachers, communities, and policymakers envision what it means to educate for life.

This integrated theoretical foundation informed every aspect of the research design—from the structure of teacher workshops and classroom interventions to the development of instruments and interpretation of findings—positioning the study as both an empirical inquiry and a living laboratory of educational renewal.

Methodology

1. Research Design and Rationale

This study adopted a convergent mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) to investigate the impact of the Rural Schools Drama Education Initiative on the well-being of teachers and students, as conceptualized through the PERMA framework. This approach was selected to capture both the quantifiable changes in specific well-being dimensions and the qualitative richness of participants' lived experiences. While quantitative data offered measurable indicators of change, qualitative data provided contextual insight into the emotional, social, and pedagogical transformations underpinning those outcomes.

Grounded in a pragmatic research paradigm (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010), this methodology prioritized methodological utility in addressing complex, real-world challenges. Within the rural Chinese educational context—where psychosocial inequities intersect with cultural and systemic dynamics—a mixed-methods strategy allowed for a more nuanced, integrative understanding of how structured interventions can foster personal and relational change.

The dual focus on teacher professional growth and student engagement reflects the program's systemic theory of change: that the flourishing of teachers serves as a catalyst for student well-being, and that both are mutually reinforced through creative, participatory pedagogy.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does participation in the Rural Schools Drama Education Initiative influence teachers' and students' well-being across the five PERMA dimensions?
2. How do teachers and students describe the changes in their engagement, relationships, and sense of meaning as a result of drama-based pedagogy?
3. What contextual and pedagogical factors facilitate—or hinder—the integration of PERMA principles into rural classroom practice?

By triangulating statistical evidence with narrative accounts, the study aimed not only to determine whether well-being improved, but to explore how and why such transformation occurred within real-world rural school settings.

2. Participants and Context

This study was conducted across three rural schools in Long'an County, Guangxi Province, China, during the 2023–2024 implementation cycle of the Rural Schools Drama Education Initiative. A total of 126 participants were included:

- Teachers (n = 15): Primarily teachers of Chinese language, moral education, and the arts, these educators completed a year-long professional development program focused on drama-based pedagogy and well-being practices.
- Students (n = 121): Primary school students aged 8 to 12 who engaged in classroom-based drama projects as well as a summer drama camp facilitated by the trained teachers.

Teacher participants were selected using purposive sampling, in collaboration with local education bureaus and the supporting foundation. The sampling aimed to ensure diversity in teaching experience (ranging from 2 to 25 years) and school types. Student participants were drawn from the teachers' existing classes, and

parental consent was obtained through established school communication channels.

The participating schools shared challenges typical of under-resourced rural Chinese settings—limited access to arts education, high teacher turnover, and large class sizes. Nonetheless, these schools also exhibited strong community cohesion and rich local cultural capital, offering a promising context in which to explore how arts-based interventions might support both academic learning and psychosocial well-being.

3. Intervention Design

The Rural Schools Drama Education Initiative comprised three interrelated components, designed to foster systemic transformation at the levels of teacher development, classroom practice, and community engagement.

(a) Teacher Professional Development

A year-long blended learning program combined intensive in-person workshops with ongoing online coaching, reflective journaling, and peer learning. Teachers participated in three multi-day workshops (each lasting 2–3 days), where they were introduced to core drama education techniques—including role-play, image theatre, and teacher-in-role—as well as strategies for integrating the PERMA framework into classroom practice.

Crucially, teachers first experienced drama as learners, reflecting on their own engagement, emotional responses, and pedagogical beliefs. This immersive approach aimed to strengthen teacher identity, foster empathy, and promote professional renewal before the methods were applied in student contexts.

(b) Classroom Implementation

Following their training, teachers co-designed and facilitated 3–4 drama-based learning units per semester, aligned with the national curriculum and adapted to local contexts. These units integrated content from moral education, Chinese language, and arts, exploring themes such as traditional folktales, environmental stewardship, and intergenerational care.

Each unit incorporated opportunities for collaborative creation, emotional expression, and student reflection, explicitly guided by the five dimensions of the PERMA model. Drama activities emphasized process over product, fostering student voice, engagement, and peer connection.

(c) Community Sharing

At the end of each term, schools hosted culminating events—including performances, exhibitions, and open classrooms—inviting parents, caregivers, and local leaders to witness students’ learning journeys. These events not only celebrated student creativity but also reinforced community pride and linked drama education to broader narratives of rural revitalization and cultural heritage. This multi-layered intervention was conceptualized as both a capacity-building strategy and a process of relational renewal. By engaging teachers as reflective practitioners, students as co-creators, and communities as partners, the initiative sought to simultaneously enhance teacher well-being, student engagement, and collective flourishing within rural educational ecosystems.

4. Quantitative Data Collection and Measures

Quantitative data were collected at two time points—pre-intervention (T1) and post-intervention (T2)—through self-report surveys administered to student participants. The aim was to assess changes in student well-being and engagement following participation in the Rural Schools Drama Education Initiative.

(a) Student Well-Being and Engagement Survey

A developmentally appropriate version of the PERMA-based well-being survey was designed for students aged 8 to 12. The instrument incorporated visual Likert response formats (e.g., smiley face scales) to ensure accessibility for younger learners in rural contexts.

The student well-being survey consisted of 15 items, each mapped to one of the five PERMA domains. Age-appropriate phrasing and visual Likert formats (e.g., smiley scales) were used to ensure accessibility for younger learners. The item distribution across domains is as follows:

Positive Emotion

1. I often feel happy and satisfied in learning or activities.
2. I discover small things that make me happy every day.
3. Even when facing difficulties, I can find things to be grateful for.

Engagement

4. I completely immerse myself in learning activities.
5. I enjoy challenging my abilities and trying new things.
6. I feel time flies when I am doing interesting things.

Relationships

7. I have friends I can trust and rely on.
8. I feel harmonious relationships with family, teachers, or peers.
9. When I need help, I can find someone to talk to or seek support.

Meaning

10. I feel my learning activities are important for my future.
11. What I do makes me feel valuable.
12. I hope to contribute to others or society through my efforts.

Accomplishment

13. I often achieve my goals and feel proud of myself.
14. I feel I have made progress in my learning.
15. I can recognize my growth and achievements in different areas.

(b) Instrument Development and Adaptation

The instrument was adapted through a **translation–back translation** process to ensure linguistic accuracy and conceptual fidelity. It was pilot-tested with a small group of rural students to assess clarity, age appropriateness, and usability. Feedback informed minor adjustments to wording and visual layout.

(c) Reliability and Validity

- Cronbach’s alpha coefficients at both T1 and T2 exceeded .80 across all major subscales, indicating strong internal consistency.
- Exploratory factor analysis confirmed the expected five-factor PERMA structure.

(d) Data Entry and Screening

Survey responses were entered by the supporting foundation’s data team and

screened for missing data, outliers, and assumptions of normality. The data were deemed suitable for subsequent statistical analysis following standard preprocessing procedures.

5. Qualitative Data Collection

To complement and deepen the quantitative findings, qualitative data were collected from multiple sources to capture the lived experiences, emotional responses, and relational dynamics associated with the Rural Schools Drama Education Initiative. Three primary methods were employed: semi-structured interviews, student focus groups, and field observations.

(a) Semi-Structured Interviews with Teachers

Fifteen teachers participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews, selected purposively to reflect diversity in age, gender, teaching experience, and level of program participation. Interviews explored teachers' emotional experiences during and after the intervention, observed shifts in classroom relationships, and perceptions of teaching and learning through drama-based methods.

- Duration: Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes.
- Language: All interviews were conducted in Mandarin, then

transcribed and translated into English for analysis.

- Focus: Questions addressed teacher identity, student engagement, challenges in implementation, and perceived impacts on personal and professional well-being.

(b) Focus Group Discussions with Students

Two focus group discussions were conducted with a total of 16 students (8 per group), aged 8 to 12, selected to represent a range of engagement levels and class participation.

- Duration: Each session lasted approximately 45 minutes.
- Facilitation: Discussions were conducted in a child-friendly format, with facilitation to encourage open sharing.

- Topics: Students discussed their experiences with drama activities, classroom relationships, feelings of confidence or anxiety, and moments they felt proud or connected.

(c) Field Observations

The researcher conducted non-participant field observations during:

- Teacher training workshops
- In-class drama lessons and summer camp

Observational focus included indicators such as emotional climate, student engagement, collaboration, and teacher facilitation styles. Observers recorded detailed field notes, which were later coded and analyzed alongside interview transcripts to enable triangulation of data across sources.

(d) Data Analysis

All qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Transcripts and field notes were coded inductively and deductively, guided by the PERMA framework and emergent themes from the data. Coding was performed in multiple rounds to identify patterns related to:

- Emotional expression and well-being
- Shifts in peer and teacher–student relationships
- Meaning-making and reflective learning

- Pedagogical transformation

Data triangulation across interviews, focus groups, and observations strengthened the trustworthiness of findings and allowed for rich, multi-perspective insight into how drama education affected well-being and relational dynamics in the rural school context.

6. Data Analysis Procedures

(a) Quantitative Analysis

Pre- and post-intervention survey data from students were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired-sample t-tests, and Cohen's d to assess changes across the five PERMA dimensions.

Significant improvements were found in:

- Accomplishment (d = 0.70)
- Relationships and Positive Emotion (d = 0.63)

These represent medium-to-large effects (Cohen, 1988). Correlational analyses also explored links between PERMA scores and student engagement.

(b) Qualitative Analysis

Interview transcripts, student focus groups, and field notes were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A hybrid coding approach was applied:

- Deductive codes based on PERMA
- Inductive codes to capture emergent themes (e.g., rediscovering voice, shared vulnerability, emotional craftsmanship)

Themes were examined across data sources to identify patterns in well-being and pedagogical change.

(c) Data Integration

Quantitative and qualitative data were integrated at the interpretation stage using a joint display matrix. For example, statistical gains in Engagement were illustrated by teacher narratives describing increased student participation and creativity. Convergent and divergent patterns enriched overall interpretation.

7. Trustworthiness, Ethics, and Researcher Positionality

To ensure rigor across both quantitative and qualitative components, the study employed multiple strategies aligned with best practices in mixed-methods research.

Reliability in the quantitative strand was supported through pilot testing and psychometric verification of student survey instruments. In the qualitative strand, credibility was enhanced through member checking, where participants reviewed summaries of their interviews for accuracy. Dependability was established through regular peer debriefings among the research team, and transferability through detailed descriptions of the rural school context and pedagogical practices. The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings further strengthened interpretive validity by cross-verifying patterns across data types (Greene, 2007). Ethical approval was obtained from local education authorities. All participants were informed of the study's purpose, confidentiality procedures, and their right to voluntary participation. For minors, both parental consent and child assent were secured. Pseudonyms were used throughout all reporting, and participating

teachers received anonymized feedback summaries to support professional reflection without evaluative pressure. The study upheld the principle of beneficence, ensuring that all research activities contributed positively to participants’ well-being. Drama workshops emphasized psychological safety, voluntary participation, and sensitivity to emotionally charged topics such as family separation—particularly relevant for left-behind children. The lead researcher, an experienced drama educator and instructional leader, maintained a reflexive stance throughout the study. While sharing the creative and pedagogical values of participants, the researcher was attentive to potential power dynamics between external facilitator and local teacher. Field notes and reflexive memos documented moments of empathy, resistance, and transformation—recognizing the research process itself as a relational act of co-learning and meaning-making.

8. Summary

This mixed-methods design provided a robust and holistic framework for examining both the measurable impacts and the lived experiences associated with the Rural Schools Drama Education Initiative. Quantitative findings demonstrated significant improvements in student well-being, particularly in Accomplishment, Positive Emotion, and Relationships. Meanwhile, qualitative insights illuminated the emotional dynamics, pedagogical transformations, and cultural meanings behind these shifts—revealing how drama education fostered connection, creativity, and personal growth in rural classrooms. By combining empirical rigor with interpretive depth, the study advances a model of educational research that is both evidence-based and human-centered—bridging the scientific and artistic dimensions of learning, well-being, and systemic change.

Results and Discussion
Overview of Findings

The pre–post PERMA survey results revealed statistically significant improvements across multiple dimensions of student well-being. The most pronounced gains were observed in:

- Accomplishment (Cohen’s d = 0.70)
- Relationships and Positive Emotion (Cohen’s d = 0.63)

These represent medium-to-large effect sizes, indicating meaningful growth in students’ sense of progress, connection, and emotional positivity. Additional gains were noted in:

- Meaning (d = 0.48)
- Engagement (d = 0.41)

Overall, composite well-being scores increased by 11.2% from baseline to post-intervention.

These quantitative trends were supported by qualitative evidence gathered from teacher interviews, student focus groups, and classroom observations.

Participants consistently described the drama process as:

- “Bringing life back to learning”

- “Making the classroom warmer”
- “Helping us see each other differently”

Teachers reported renewed professional confidence, increased empathy toward students, and stronger peer collaboration. Students expressed joy, emotional safety, and pride in co-creating performances and narratives that reflected their lives and communities.

Together, these findings suggest that the Rural Schools Drama Education Initiative not only improved measurable well-being but also reshaped the relational and cultural fabric of participating schools. The following sections unpack these outcomes through the lens of the PERMA framework, examining how drama pedagogy operationalized each domain of well-being in rural educational settings.

PERMA Domain	Effect Size (Cohen’s d)	Quantitative Result	Qualitative Insights
Positive Emotion	0.63	Statistically significant increase (p < .01)	Laughter, joy, and emotional safety re-entered the classroom; teachers and students reconnected through play and humor.
Engagement	0.41	Moderate increase (p < .05)	Students showed deep focus and creative ownership; teachers experienced professional flow.
Relationships	0.63	Statistically significant increase (p < .01)	Trust and empathy rebuilt in classrooms; marginalized students found voice and visibility; stronger teacher communities emerged.
Meaning	0.48	Statistically significant increase (p < .05)	Drama linked personal and cultural narratives to school learning; enhanced relevance and moral engagement.
Accomplishment	0.7	Highest effect size, large increase (p < .01)	Pride in collaborative success; shift from performance metrics to intrinsic growth; increased confidence and self-efficacy.

1. Positive Emotion: Rediscovering Joy and Emotional Expression

One of the most immediate and visible transformations observed was the revitalization of joy within classrooms. Teachers consistently noted that laughter, play, and curiosity—often suppressed in exam-oriented settings—began to reclaim space in their daily instruction.

Quantitative data supported these observations: the Positive Emotion subscale showed a statistically significant improvement (p < .01), indicating increased feelings of happiness, optimism, and emotional well-being among students.

As one primary school teacher expressed:

“At first, I was nervous to act or play games with my students. But when I joined in, they laughed so hard—they said, ‘Teacher, you can be funny too!’ That laughter changed everything. It broke the wall between us.”

This anecdote illustrates how affective warmth became a pedagogical

resource rather than a distraction. In many cases, laughter acted as a disarming force, reducing hierarchical boundaries and fostering mutual openness between students and teachers.

These findings align with Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build Theory, which posits that positive emotions broaden attention and thinking while building enduring psychological resources. In the drama classroom, emotional expression is not peripheral but central to learning humor, tension, and empathy become vehicles for meaning-making.

For students, positive emotion was closely tied to psychological safety.

One 11-year-old shared: "Drama is the only time I'm not afraid to be wrong."

This sentiment underscores how emotional freedom creates the conditions for cognitive risk-taking—a critical factor in creative and collaborative learning.

In rural contexts where fear of failure often dominates classroom culture, the reintroduction of joy and play served as a pedagogical act of liberation, reconnecting learning with curiosity, confidence, and intrinsic motivation.

2. Engagement: Deep Participation and Flow in Learning

Engagement scores showed moderate but consistent gains across participating schools (Cohen's $d = 0.41$). Qualitative data suggested these gains were driven by heightened student participation, focus, and a sense of creative agency.

Unlike traditional instruction, drama activities required physical, emotional, and intellectual investment, encouraging students to co-construct knowledge rather than passively receive it.

Observation notes documented recurring moments of deep absorption akin to Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of flow:

"During the group improvisation, students lost all sense of the clock. They negotiated roles, built props out of paper, and kept rehearsing even after the bell rang."

Notably, teachers also reported entering states of professional flow, particularly while designing original lessons or facilitating performances. This reciprocal engagement suggests that student and teacher motivation are co-regulated: when educators experience enthusiasm and creative ownership, students mirror that energy through sustained focus and curiosity.

Drama's experiential nature allowed students to merge cognition and emotion, translating abstract concepts into embodied understanding. For example, in one middle school, students explored fairness by dramatizing a local folktale about resource sharing during a drought. This embodied inquiry deepened comprehension and moral reasoning, surpassing what could be achieved through textbook discussion alone.

Thus, engagement in this context extended beyond attention or compliance. It became a relational and ethical commitment—anchored in shared curiosity, imaginative problem-solving, and a sense of co-ownership in the learning process.

3. Relationships: Rebuilding Trust and Community

Relationships emerged as the strongest and most consistent area of growth across all participating schools. Quantitative data showed substantial gains in this domain (Cohen's $d = 0.63$), and qualitative evidence overwhelmingly supported

these findings, revealing renewed trust, empathy, and mutual respect between teachers and students.

The ensemble nature of drama education inherently fosters collaboration and interdependence. Teachers observed that previously withdrawn students began speaking with confidence, while those labeled as "disruptive" found meaningful roles within group activities.

One teacher reflected:

"The boy who never raised his hand became our director. Everyone listened to him because he had ideas. His classmates started calling him by name instead of nickname. It was like watching him grow new roots."

Such accounts illustrate drama's potential to restructure classroom dynamics, giving marginalized students visibility, voice, and belonging. These relational shifts align with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which identifies relatedness as a core psychological need underpinning motivation and well-being.

Importantly, the initiative also strengthened teacher communities. Many educators described the professional workshops as rare spaces of authentic connection, contrasting with the performative collegiality of traditional training environments. One teacher wrote:

"We cried together, laughed together, and realized we all carry the same fatigue. Drama gave us permission to feel again."

These collective experiences suggest that the program served as a form of relational repair, addressing not only student disengagement but also the emotional isolation of rural teachers. When trust is rebuilt, and relationships are rehumanized, classrooms begin to function as ecosystems of mutual care—a critical condition for educational flourishing in under-resourced contexts.

4. Meaning: Connecting Learning to Life and Culture

The Meaning domain showed statistically significant improvement ($p < .05$), supported by compelling qualitative evidence. Participants consistently described drama as a bridge between academic content and lived experience, enabling both students and teachers to connect personal emotions, cultural narratives, and broader social themes.

Teachers frequently referred to drama as both a "mirror and a window"—a mirror reflecting their own values and struggles, and a window into students' emotional worlds. In one lesson sequence, students dramatized the experience of migrant parents returning home for Spring Festival. The activity prompted spontaneous storytelling and emotional disclosures, many of which had never surfaced in class before.

One student shared:

"When I played the father, I realized how hard it must be to leave home to earn money. I used to feel angry, but now I understand more."

This moment of cognitive empathy, rooted in cultural storytelling, exemplifies what Bruner (1996) called "learning with meaning"—where knowledge is not only understood but internalized as morally and emotionally significant.

For teachers, meaning emerged through a rediscovery of educational purpose:

"I used to think my job was to teach content. Now I see it is to help children become whole."

These reflections reveal how drama education repositioned both teachers and students as active meaning-makers, not passive transmitters or recipients of information. In rural Chinese schools—where curricula can feel disconnected from local realities—this re-linking of curriculum, community, and identity restored a sense of dignity and relevance to the act of teaching and learning.

5. Accomplishment: Growth, Mastery, and Confidence

Accomplishment recorded the highest effect size among the five PERMA domains (Cohen's $d = 0.70$), reflecting substantial gains in students' and teachers' sense of achievement, mastery, and self-efficacy. Notably, this sense of accomplishment was grounded not in external validation, but in intrinsic progress and shared success.

Students expressed pride not only in final performances, but in the process—overcoming stage fright, memorizing lines, and resolving group conflicts. For many, collaborative accomplishment replaced individual competition as the core metric of success. As one student shared: "When I stood on stage, I wasn't scared anymore. I thought, 'We did this together.'"

Teachers also redefined what it meant to succeed. Rather than focusing on test scores or administrative approval, they found fulfillment in student engagement and joy. One teacher reflected: "For the first time in years, I felt proud not because of scores but because my students were happy to learn."

These findings resonate with Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, which emphasizes that belief in one's ability to make a difference is a powerful motivator. In the drama classroom, incremental mastery was consistently visible: each rehearsal, gesture, and improvisation offered immediate feedback and a tangible sense of progress.

By reframing success as growth rather than perfection, the initiative nurtured a form of resilient accomplishment—learning that values effort, adaptability, and co-creation as much as outcomes.

6. Cross-Domain Synergies: The Ecology of Flourishing

While each PERMA domain was analyzed independently, participants experienced them as interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Positive Emotion sparked Engagement; Engagement deepened Relationships; Relationships gave rise to Meaning; and Meaning sustained Accomplishment. This cyclical dynamic reflects Fredrickson's (2004) broaden-and-build theory and affirms a view of well-being as an ecological system rather than a linear checklist.

Quantitatively, intercorrelations among PERMA domains ($r = 0.52\text{--}0.78$, $p < .01$) confirmed their interdependence. Qualitatively, participants rarely spoke of "joy," "connection," or "achievement" in isolation. Instead, stories unfolded in sequences of transformation: laughter led to trust, trust led to insight, and insight led to confidence.

A teacher shared this chain succinctly:

"We started the class laughing about silly gestures. Then, when a quiet girl shared her story, everyone listened deeply. Later, that same girl volunteered to lead the next scene. I realized joy opened the door to courage."

Such reflections illustrate that flourishing is a process, not an outcome. Drama education created conditions for this process by engaging emotion, cognition, and relationships simultaneously—mirroring the integrated nature of human well-being.

7. Contextual Factors and Challenges

While overall outcomes were positive, the study also identified several contextual challenges that shaped implementation and sustainability.

Structural Constraints

Many rural schools faced rigid schedules and limited administrative flexibility, making it difficult to integrate drama regularly. Leadership support emerged as a critical enabler: schools where principals engaged with the initiative—through training or attendance at performances—reported stronger program continuity.

Cultural Adaptation

Some teachers initially perceived drama as "too playful" or "non-academic." Over time, however, observing student engagement and emotional growth helped shift these attitudes. This underscores the need for culturally sensitive introduction of innovation, balancing respect for prevailing norms with gradual exposure to alternative pedagogies.

Emotional Labor

Engaging deeply through drama demanded emotional vulnerability, especially from teachers. Some described moments of exhaustion, while others experienced personal catharsis:

"When I cried during the role-play about a student's loneliness, I realized I was releasing my own feelings of being unseen."

These accounts highlight both the healing potential and the emotional demands of arts-based practice. Future scaling efforts should include structured reflection and peer support mechanisms to sustain teacher well-being.

8. Discussion: Drama Education as Positive Education in Action

The findings demonstrate that drama education operationalizes positive psychology principles in real-world classroom settings. It transforms PERMA from an abstract model into lived pedagogy—a process in which well-being is performed, experienced, and co-created.

In doing so, the initiative aligns with and extends global movements in positive education (Seligman et al., 2009; Norrish, 2015), not by emphasizing individual cognition alone, but by grounding flourishing in collective, artistic, and relational experience. The aesthetic, embodied, and social dimensions of drama uniquely activate all five PERMA domains—often simultaneously—a synergy rarely achieved through cognitive or behavioral interventions.

Moreover, the study advances a broader vision of educational equity through well-being. For left-behind children, drama offered a space of recognition, joy, and belonging. For teachers, it restored professional vitality and creative agency. These ripple effects suggest that well-being is both a pedagogical

strategy and a moral imperative—a foundation for transforming schools into humanizing spaces of care, connection, and purpose.

9. Summary of Contributions

(a) Empirical Contribution

Demonstrates that a culturally adapted, arts-based intervention can significantly improve multiple dimensions of student well-being, with large effect sizes in Accomplishment and Relationships.

(b) Theoretical Contribution

Proposes an integrated model linking PERMA and drama pedagogy, offering a relational and experiential framework for flourishing.

(c) Practical Contribution

Offers a replicable model for embedding well-being science into classroom practice through creative, teacher-led methods.

(d) Equity Contribution

Highlights how drama education can act as an emotionally restorative and socially empowering practice in marginalized rural contexts.

10. Concluding Reflection

This study affirms that education and well-being are inseparable. When learning is embodied, relational, and meaningful, both students and teachers flourish—not only as individuals, but as part of resilient, emotionally connected communities. The Rural Schools Drama Education Initiative exemplifies how drama can serve as positive education in action—transforming classrooms into spaces where emotion, imagination, and purpose converge to nurture human potential.

Conclusion and Implications

1. Reframing Well-Being and Learning in Rural Education

This study demonstrates that drama education can serve as a catalyst for holistic well-being and pedagogical renewal in rural schools. By integrating the PERMA framework from positive psychology with the participatory and relational methods of drama education, the Rural Schools Drama Education Initiative cultivated measurable improvements in teachers' and students' flourishing—particularly in Accomplishment, Relationships, and Positive Emotions.

Beyond quantitative gains, the initiative reshaped classroom culture: teachers rediscovered joy and meaning in teaching, students developed confidence and empathy, and communities experienced renewed pride in their local schools. These outcomes underscore that well-being and learning are mutually reinforcing—that emotional and relational development are not luxuries but preconditions for cognitive engagement and educational equity.

In doing so, this research challenges the traditional separation between academic achievement and emotional growth that continues to dominate educational discourse in many parts of China and the world. It argues that a sustainable path to equity lies not in remediation or standardization, but in re-humanizing education—making classrooms places where every learner can feel seen, heard, and valued.

2. Theoretical Implications: Integrating Positive Psychology and Drama Education

The study's findings contribute to the theoretical advancement of positive education by demonstrating how the PERMA model can be enacted through creative, embodied practice. While PERMA provides a robust conceptual map for flourishing, its implementation often remains cognitive and individualistic. Drama education transforms this framework into relational, embodied, and communal experience.

In the drama classroom:

- Positive Emotion is not a mood to be measured but an affective energy generated through collective imagination.
- Engagement is not compliance but flow—sustained absorption in meaningful action.
- Relationships are not incidental but foundational, as collaboration and empathy drive every dramatic process.
- Meaning is discovered through shared stories that connect personal experience with cultural and moral questions.
- Accomplishment emerges from the courage to create, fail, and grow together.

This alignment affirms that flourishing is performative and participatory, not merely psychological. It also extends Seligman's (2011) model into intercultural and arts-based education contexts, revealing its adaptability beyond Western individualistic frameworks.

Moreover, this synthesis offers a systemic view of well-being that aligns with emerging ecological models of education (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Roffey, 2012). Rather than treating well-being as an individual attribute, it situates flourishing within interdependent relationships among teachers, students, and communities. Drama education, as a collaborative art form, provides the structural and emotional architecture for this ecology to thrive.

3. Methodological Implications: Mixed Methods for Complex Realities

Methodologically, the study demonstrates the power of mixed-methods inquiry for capturing the complexity of educational well-being. Quantitative data provided empirical rigor and comparability, while qualitative narratives revealed the emotional depth and contextual nuance of human experience. The convergence of these strands produced a multi-dimensional portrait of change, illuminating how numerical improvement intertwines with stories of vulnerability, trust, and rediscovery.

This approach exemplifies what Bamberger (2012) describes as "methodological pluralism"—the deliberate use of multiple forms of knowing to do justice to the complexity of social interventions. In the context of arts-based education, where transformation is both affective and relational, such pluralism is not optional but essential.

The study also underscores the importance of participatory and reflective research. Teachers were not merely subjects but co-researchers who documented their own growth through journals and dialogue. This participatory ethos resonates with both Improvement Science (Bryk et al., 2017) and Action Research traditions, reinforcing the idea that sustainable

educational improvement arises from cycles of reflection and adaptation rather than external prescription.

4. Practical Implications for Teachers and Schools

At the practical level, this study provides a replicable model for embedding well-being within classroom practice—not as an add-on, but as an intrinsic part of teaching and learning. Several key implications emerge:

(a) Teacher Professional Development as Emotional Reawakening:

Traditional training often focuses on techniques or assessment. In contrast, drama-based professional learning engages the whole teacher—head, heart, and body. Teachers who experience creative flow and emotional connection in training are more likely to foster similar states in their students.

(b) Well-Being Through Pedagogy, Not Programs:

Schools frequently treat well-being as a separate curriculum or checklist. The findings suggest that integrating PERMA principles through everyday pedagogy—storytelling, reflection, collaboration—can be far more effective and sustainable.

(c) Community and Cultural Relevance:

By drawing on local stories, traditions, and moral values, drama reconnects education to the lifeworld of rural children. This culturally grounded approach enhances engagement and ensures that well-being is not imported but rooted in place and identity.

(d) From Classroom to Ecosystem:

As teachers flourish, the positive ripple effects extend outward—to students, colleagues, and even families. Several schools reported increased parent participation in performances and community discussions. Such systemic contagion highlights the potential for drama-based well-being approaches to transform school culture as a whole.

5. Implications for Educational Policy and Equity

The Rural Schools Drama Education Initiative offers actionable insights for policymakers seeking to address inequities in China’s rural education system and beyond.

(a) Equity Through Well-Being:

Policy discourse often equates equity with access to resources or test performance. This study reframes equity as access to flourishing—the right of every child and teacher to experience joy, belonging, and purpose in learning. Embedding well-being into educational policy would thus move beyond remediation toward human development.

(b) Recognition of the Arts as a Core Equity Strategy:

Drama education, often marginalized in curriculum design, should be recognized as a strategic vehicle for addressing emotional, social, and cognitive disparities. Its capacity to cultivate empathy, communication, and resilience makes it indispensable for twenty-first-century education.

(c) Supporting Teacher Well-Being as a Policy Priority:

The evidence that teacher flourishing directly influences student outcomes calls for systemic investment in teacher support structures. Policies should encourage creative pedagogies, collaborative reflection, and professional autonomy rather

than compliance-based accountability.

(d) Scaling Through Partnership:

The success of this initiative depended on collaboration between NGOs, local education bureaus, and universities. Policymakers can foster sustainable impact by institutionalizing such multi-sector partnerships, providing frameworks for scaling without losing local authenticity.

In essence, the findings advocate a shift from education as performance to education as flourishing—from standardized outcomes to meaningful human growth.

6. Limitations and Future Research

While the study yielded compelling results, several limitations warrant acknowledgment.

(a) Sample Size and Generalizability:

The sample (n = 121) provided adequate statistical power for medium effects but limits generalization across all rural regions of China. Future studies should employ larger and more diverse samples across provinces to confirm the robustness of findings.

(b) Longitudinal Impact:

The current design captured short-term gains over one academic year. Future longitudinal research should examine the sustainability of well-being improvements and track whether positive effects persist or evolve over multiple years.

(c) Measurement Sensitivity:

Although the PERMA-Profiler provided reliable results, it may not fully capture culturally specific dimensions of well-being in Chinese rural contexts—such as filial responsibility, community belonging, or moral virtue. Developing context-sensitive well-being instruments represents an important next step.

(d) Researcher Positionality:

As a practitioner-researcher, the author’s dual role may have introduced subtle biases in data interpretation. Future studies could strengthen validity through external evaluation teams or participatory co-analysis involving teachers themselves.

(e) Causal Inference:

While mixed-methods convergence supports the inference of meaningful change, the quasi-experimental design without random assignment limits causal claims. Future research might employ matched comparison groups or cluster-randomized trials to examine causal pathways between drama education, engagement, and well-being.

7. Directions for Future Research

Building on the current findings, three promising directions emerge:

(a) Teacher Flourishing and School Leadership:

Investigate how teacher well-being interacts with leadership practices. Can principals trained in arts-based facilitation sustain a culture of flourishing school-wide?

(b) Neuroscience of Engagement:

Explore how embodied learning through drama influences cognitive and

affective processes, potentially using physiological measures (e.g., heart rate variability, EEG) to capture real-time engagement and emotional regulation.

(c) Cross-Cultural Comparative Studies:

Comparative research across different cultural and socio-economic contexts could illuminate universal and culturally specific mechanisms of flourishing through drama education. Such studies would also contribute to global dialogue on positive education and arts-based learning.

8. Concluding Reflection: Education as a Living Art

At its heart, this study reaffirms that education is a moral and aesthetic endeavor—an art of cultivating human beings, not merely producing results. In the classrooms of rural China, where scarcity and standardization often prevail, drama became a medium of renewal. It reawakened laughter where silence had settled, community where isolation had grown, and meaning where routine had replaced wonder.

Through the lens of PERMA and Drama Education, well-being was not treated as a peripheral outcome but as the essence of learning itself. Teachers and students discovered that to learn is to connect—to self, to others, and to life.

The Rural Schools Drama Education Initiative stands as both a case study and a call to action: to place human flourishing at the center of education policy and practice. When classrooms become spaces of empathy, creativity, and purpose, education transcends survival—it becomes a collective act of becoming more fully human.

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Performing Macao. Beyond the Script: Unlocking Language and Culture Through Drama Education

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Abstract

The arts enhance learning by providing a creative, pressure-free context that fosters self-expression beyond rote memorization methods. Drama pedagogy, applied here to language learning, draws on Macao's unique history — a Portuguese enclave in China from 1557 to 1999, blending cultures through centuries of trade and cultural exchange. This hybrid society emerged from deep Portuguese–Chinese interaction, shaped by socio-economic change, Jesuit influence, heritage sites, and even casino culture, making Macao a model of intercultural dialogue and resilient identity. The paper links this cultural richness to language education through three drama-based activities: one reenacts the 16th-century creation of the first Portuguese–Chinese dictionary by Jesuits Matteo Ricci and Ruggieri with their pioneering Romanization system; the second activity uses sound painting to explore ten historic heritage sites. In the third activity, students roleplay solving a theft at Casino Lisboa, practicing Chinese grammar structures through drama-based observation, communication, and collaboration. These drama activities provide opportunities to learn about the Chinese language and culture and can be adapted to different languages, including English, Portuguese, Spanish, French, Italian, and others.

Keywords: Macao, drama pedagogy, performative language teaching, Chinese language learning, Cultural heritage.

1. Introduction

The arts are key factors that enable students to learn better. They create a meaningful context in which participants feel free to create and express themselves without the pressure of traditional pedagogical methodologies that are based on memorization and repetition. There is a direct link between the benefits of the arts and education (Catterall, 2002). In this article, we focus on drama pedagogy applied to language learning with some original didactic approaches based on the history of Macao.

In the past, the term “theater” was considered a final product, where actors perform a play following a script in front of an audience, while the concept of “drama” was seen as a process, where participants are actors and spectators at the same time. Although both can be beneficial for education, drama is more flexible and can be easily adapted to the language classroom; therefore, the term “drama pedagogy” was coined.

In the field of drama pedagogy, Spolin (1986) conducted groundbreaking work by connecting drama games and language learning in the classroom, emphasizing that these activities improved students' communication skills, including oral and written expression, as well as nonverbal communication.

Later, the concept of “Performative Language Teaching (PLT)” was first coined by Schewe (2013) as an umbrella term that integrates various dramatic techniques and overcame the separation between drama and theater that existed in the 1980s. Then Piazzoli (2018) defined PLT as an approach based on second language teaching, highlighting its vast repertoire of dramatic tools applicable to language education and didactics.

In 2010, the European Union (DICE Consortium, 2010) carried out a two-year research project aimed to evaluate the impact of drama in education, specifically on five of the eight Lisbon Key Competences (Communication in the mother tongue, Communication in foreign languages, Social and civic competencies, Autonomous learning, and Cultural awareness and expression). The remaining three Lisbon Key Competences: Mathematical and scientific knowledge, Digital competence, and Initiative and entrepreneurship, were acknowledged but not the primary focus of the study. The DICE study was conducted across 12 countries (Portugal, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Serbia, Palestine, Norway, Slovenia, the United Kingdom, and Romania) and adopted a multidisciplinary approach involving 4,475 participants (students aged 13-16 years). The methodology included experimental groups that engaged in over 100 PLT activities, while the control groups followed traditional educational methods. Research findings confirmed that PLT significantly enhanced the five targeted key competences and validated PLT as an effective educational strategy for holistic competence development.

Many researchers have investigated how PLT helps improve language learning: Stinson and Freebody (2006) demonstrated how PLT improved oral language skills with high school students of English in Singapore; Galante and Thomson (2017) showed that PLT significantly improved oral fluency in Brazilian Portuguese-speaking English learners in Brazil compared to traditional methods; and Corderi Novoa and Garcia Mayo (2024) verified that Spanish learners of Chinese in Spain improved their oral fluency thanks to PLT.

The final objective of this paper is to create several PLT activities that happen

in different epochs of Macao and that are designed for learners of Mandarin Chinese (but that can also be easily adapted to any other language) and that can easily be implemented in the language classroom. We hope that students can go beyond the script and unlock language and culture through drama in education (PLT). We believe that this can be useful for language teachers and language learners, allowing them to practice their target language in a specific context in time and space. We chose Macao because for centuries it has been an example of peaceful cultural and linguistic exchange and dialogue among civilizations, between Portugal and China, between the West and the East.

2. Macao’s Historical Evolution: From Ming Dynasty Concession to Global Gateway

Macao is a special administrative region of China located on the southern coast of the country, next to the province of Guangdong. The English name is “Macao”, in Portuguese it is “Macau”, in Chinese it is pronounced Àomén and written in two different ways (Simplified) 澳门, and (Traditional) 澳門。The first inhabitants of Macau were immigrants from the Chinese provinces of Fujian and Guangdong, two groups of people who worshiped Māzǔ (媽祖), also known as the “Empress of Heaven” or Tiānhòu (天后), who is the most revered sea goddess in Chinese coastal regions (Zhang, 2023). Mazu’s beliefs and customs were inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009. The name Macao comes from the Chinese 媽閣澳 (Mā Gé Ào), where 媽 (Mā) refers to Mazu, the sea goddess, the goddess of sailors. 閣 (Gé) means pavilion or temple — referencing the famous A-Ma Temple, and 澳 (Ào) is a bay or inlet — the geographic feature that gave Macao its name. Therefore, 媽閣澳 (Mā Gé Ào) means “Bay of the A-Ma Pavilion,” which Portuguese sailors phonetically adapted into “Macau” (Egerod, 1969).

2.1 Colonial Genesis under Ming Sovereignty

Macao’s establishment followed Portuguese mariners’ arrival in 1557 at the Pearl River Delta during Portuguese King Manuel I’s reign (1495–1521), when Portugal dominated Indian Ocean trade routes (Braga, 1949). Crucially, Portuguese settlement occurred through negotiation, not conquest. In 1557, Chinese Ming authorities permitted temporary residency while retaining sovereignty—evidenced by Guangzhou officials’ oversight, judicial jurisdiction over serious crimes, and annual land rent payments. This established the “Macao model”: Portuguese administrative autonomy beneath enduring Chinese suzerainty (Cartwright, 2021; Gunn, 1996).

2.2 Resisting Imperial Encroachments

According to Boxer (1963), during the Iberian Union (1580–1640), when Spain annexed Portugal, Macao uniquely resisted Habsburg authority. In 1583, the formation of a municipal council (Leal Senado) created a de facto capital for Portuguese loyalists overseas. This institutional defiance solidified Macao’s identity as a bastion of Portuguese sovereignty despite geopolitical turmoil (Anders, 1992).

2.3 Nineteenth-Century Colonial Pressures

Portugal’s post-1840s attempts to alter Macao’s status—including unilaterally declaring it a free port (1845) and ceasing rent payments (1849)—were rejected by Qing officials. The 1887 Sino-Portuguese Treaty formalized Portuguese “perpetual occupation” while affirming Chinese sovereignty, stipulating Portugal could not transfer Macao without China’s consent (Ball, 1905). This legal duality defined Macao until its 1999 handover (Wordie, 2013). In Table 1 below, there is a summary of the history of Macao:

Period	Governing Framework	Sovereignty Assertion
Ming-Qing (1557-1849)	Portuguese municipal administration under Chinese oversight	Annual land rent paid to Xiangshan County
Post-Opium War (1849-1887)	Portuguese unilateral administration	Qing rejection of sovereignty claims
Treaty Era (1887-1999)	"Perpetual Portuguese occupation"	Treaty clause prohibiting transfer without Chinese consent
Post-1999	"One Country, Two Systems" Special Administrative Region (SAR)	Chinese sovereignty with Portuguese cultural guarantees

Table 1: Key Events in Macao’s Political Status.

All the historical, cultural, and political factors that have shaped Macao’s unique identity have an extraordinary influence on how the region has evolved over the centuries and help us navigate its dual heritage of Chinese cultural roots and Portuguese influence (Clayton, 2009).

2.4 Macao: A Tapestry of Cross-Cultural Exchange at the Edge of Empires

Historical, political, and social factors have shaped the multilingual landscape of Macau, creating a unique coexistence and functional distribution of Portuguese, Cantonese, Mandarin, and English languages in various domains such as education, government, and daily communication (Zhang & Yang, 2022). According to Lam & leong (2022), post-1999, Macao retained Portuguese as an official language, civil law traditions, and cultural linkages. Lisbon maintains consular representation, while Macao’s streets preserve Portuguese toponyms. Crucially, Portugal formally adheres to the “One China” principle while supporting Macao’s autonomy under the Basic Law. In “Portuguese Language Increasingly Popular in Macao as City Sharpens Bilingual Edge” (Channel News Asia, 2025), Professor João Veloso, Head of the Department of Portuguese at the University of Macau (UM), highlights a surge in Portuguese language enrollment amid Macao’s economic diversification beyond the gaming industry. UM teaches Portuguese to more than 1,000 students, with mainland Chinese students outnumbering locals. The UM, where Veloso teaches, also offers degrees in Portuguese and serves as a critical hub for Portuguese-language education. Veloso attributes this trend to professional opportunities in business,

diplomacy, and trade with Lusophone nations like Brazil, noting that students view Portuguese as a strategic asset for engaging with markets where “China is a big market for Brazil”. Veloso stresses Macao’s unique position as a bilingual hub (Chinese/Portuguese), facilitating trade between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. Businesses leverage Macao’s multilingual talent to access the Greater Bay Area’s vast economy, with Portuguese-speaking start-ups in biotech and Medtech courting Chinese investors. Veloso also argues that Macao’s official Portuguese status—a legacy of its colonial past—enables it to serve as a “bridge” for Sino-Lusophone relations, especially amid shifting global dynamics. He concludes, “China is one of the biggest countries... and one tiny place [Macao] that has Portuguese as an official language has to make a difference”, emphasizing institutional efforts to transform linguistic heritage into economic and diplomatic capital. Cheng & Wong (2023) carried out a sociolinguistic analysis of multilingualism in Macau, examining the use and status of Portuguese, Cantonese, Mandarin, English, and other local languages. The authors investigated language attitudes, proficiency, and usage patterns among different demographic groups. They find that while Cantonese remains the dominant language, there is a growing influence of Mandarin due to economic integration with mainland China. The study also highlights the role of English as a global lingua franca and the cultural significance of Portuguese as a legacy of colonial history. The linguistic landscape of Macao can be explained as “Multilingualism and Code-Switching”. Macao operates through overlapping linguistic spheres. See Table 2 below:

Language	Speaker Percentage	Primary Domains	Notable Influence
Cantonese Chinese	80.1%	Mother tongue of the majority. Commerce, daily life, media.	Gambling terminology, folk religion.
Mandarin Chinese	15.6%	Government, education.	Rising with mainland integration.
English	4.9%	Tourism, gaming, higher education <i>lingua franca</i> , and finance.	Corporate communication.
Portuguese	0.6%	Legal system, historical texts, toponyms	Creole substratum, cultural identity
Patúa – Macanese Patois	Less than 0.5%	Ceremonial and cultural.	Cultural treasure, Macao heritage.

Table 2: Language Distribution and Domains in Modern Macao.

The Patuá-speaking Macanese community (Eurasian descendants) speaks Patuá, also known as Macanese Patois, which is a Portuguese-based creole language. It emerged in Macao in the 16th century, following Portuguese settlement. The Macanese community developed distinctive folk traditions blending Cantonese,

Malay, Sinhalese, and Portuguese elements. Historically, Patuá was spoken within households, especially among lower and middle-class Macanese families, and primarily by women. It was used for informal communication, storytelling, and community bonding (Remedios, n.d.). Today, its use is largely ceremonial and cultural, such as in theater performances by groups like Dóci Papiaçám di Macau, which stage plays in Patuá with Portuguese and Chinese subtitles (Sá Machado, 2020). Though marginalized historically, Patuá is now celebrated as a cultural treasure, representing the Macanese heritage and resilience. Though this language now faces endangerment (Endangered Languages Project, n.d.). Macao is a mix of cultures. Centuries of contact among all the languages coexisting in Macao generated enduring loanwords and lexical hybridization. For example, from Chinese to Portuguese: 茶chá (tea), 功夫gōngfu (kung fu), etc. Also, from Portuguese to Cantonese: pátio (courtyard), bacalhau (salted cod), etc. Moreover, from English to Macanese: sandwich (san daa wich), minced (minchi, reflecting the dish’s key ingredient—minced meat, usually pork), etc. Macao has a significant translation heritage and pioneered Sino-European linguistic mediation. According to Hsia (2016), between 1583 and 1588, Jesuits Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci created the first Chinese dictionaries in Macao (a topic we will expand in the next chapter). Also, Macao was the origin of the “Chinese Documents” (1693–1886), that is, Chinese Qing governance archives with Portuguese translations, now UNESCO Memory of the World (Gunn, 1996).

3. Bridging Worlds: Matteo Ricci, Diego de Pantoja, and the Jesuit Mission in Ming China

The late 16th and early 17th centuries witnessed an extraordinary cultural and scientific exchange between Europe and China, primarily facilitated by the pioneering efforts of Jesuit missionaries. Among these, the Italian Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) and the Spaniard Diego de Pantoja (1571–1618) stand as monumental figures. Their work in China, beginning from their strategic base in Portuguese Macao, represented not merely a religious mission but a profound intellectual encounter between civilizations. Their linguistic studies, cultural adaptations, and arduous journey to the imperial court in Beijing left an indelible mark on Sino-Western relations, establishing frameworks for cross-cultural understanding that resonate centuries later.

3.1 Foundations: Early Lives and Call to China

Matteo Ricci (利玛竇 Lì Mǎdòu) was born in Macerata, Italy, in 1552. Educated in law, classics, and sciences at the Roman College under mathematician Christopher Clavius, he joined the Society of Jesus in 1571. Driven by missionary zeal, he volunteered for Asia and reached Goa in 1578. In 1582, Alessandro Valignano (范礼安 Fàn Lǐ’ān), Visitor of Jesuit missions in Asia, summoned him to Macao to prepare for China’s evangelization. Valignano’s strategy emphasized cultural adaptation: mastering language, respecting local customs, and leveraging Western sciences as tools for dialogue. Ricci abandoned Buddhist robes for the silk of a Confucian

scholar, growing a beard and hair to resemble the literati. This “accommodation method” was rigorously enforced in Macao, transforming the Jesuits into cultural intermediaries rather than colonial evangelists (New World Encyclopedia, n.d.; Shih & Encyclopaedia Britannica Editors, 2025; Wikipedia contributors, n.d; Yuan, 2022).

Diego de Pantoja (庞迪峨 Páng Dí'é), born near Madrid, Spain, in 1571, entered the Jesuits in 1589. Excelling in theology, philosophy, and languages, he was inspired by missionaries’ accounts of Asia. Despite family opposition, he departed for Lisbon in 1596, reaching Goa and finally Macao on July 20, 1597. His assignment shifted from Japan to China due to regional conflicts, leading him to study at Macao’s St. Paul’s College under Valignano’s direction (Caraballo, 2021; Kiddle Encyclopedia, 2025; Moncó, 2012; Wikipedia contributors, n.d.).

3.2 Macao: Crucible of Linguistic and Cultural Preparation

Macao, a Portuguese enclave since 1557, served as the strategic gateway for Jesuits entering China. For Ricci and Pantoja, it was an intensive training ground. Valignano founded St. Paul’s College (Colégio de São Paulo) in Macao at the end of the 16th century, where both missionaries received systematic instruction. It became one of the first Western-style universities in East Asia, combining religious, linguistic, and scientific education. It played a key role in training missionaries like Matteo Ricci for work in China. Ricci arrived in August 1582 and immediately began language studies under Michele Ruggieri (罗明坚 Luó Míngjiān), the first Jesuit dedicated to learning Chinese. The college combined theological training with practical preparation for cultural immersion, housing printing presses, a library, and scholarly resources (Cartwright, 2021).

Ricci’s Linguistic Innovations: Between 1583 and 1588, Ricci and Ruggieri pioneered linguistic tools critical for future missionaries. During their stay in the city of Zhaoqing, they compiled the first Portuguese Chinese dictionary (Ruggieri & Ricci, 1583–1588). The dictionary represented a major linguistic innovation by organizing entries into three distinct columns: Portuguese terms on the left, corresponding Chinese characters on the right, and in the center, a Romanized transcription of Chinese pronunciation marked with diacritical signs to indicate tonal variations (Assunção, Neto & Fernandes, 2019). The manuscript was lost in the Jesuit Archives in Rome until 1934, when Pasquale d’Elia rediscovered it. It was finally published in 2001 under the editorial direction of John W. Witek (2001).

Ricci was the first Western scholar to develop a Romanization system for Chinese characters with diacritical marks to indicate tones—a revolutionary step in Chinese linguistics, laying the groundwork for later lexicographical works. This work is recognized as a groundbreaking contribution to Chinese linguistics and missionary history. His goal was to help European learners—especially Portuguese speakers—pronounce Chinese words using the Latin alphabet. Ricci’s romanization system was an alphabet-based transcription. He used Latin letters to represent Chinese sounds, creating a bridge for Western learners unfamiliar with Chinese characters (Assunção, Neto & Fernandes, 2019).

Also, regarding Chinese tone indication, while Ricci’s system did not use modern marks like those in Hanyu Pinyin (e.g., mā, má, mǎ, mà), he was aware of tonal distinctions. Therefore, he attempted to reflect them through spelling

variations or annotations. In addition, Ricci applied this system in his Chinese Portuguese dictionary (Ruggieri & Ricci, 1583–1588), allowing Portuguese speakers to “sound out” Chinese words phonetically. Although Ricci’s system was not standardized or widely adopted, it laid the groundwork for later Romanization efforts such as Wade–Giles and Hanyu Pinyin. Ricci’s academic recognition is validated by scholars like Luo Changpei (1951), who credit the Jesuits with revolutionizing Chinese phonology by replacing traditional fanqie notation with alphabetic transcription, simplifying tonal indication.

On the other hand, Spaniard Diego de Pantoja spent nearly two years (1597–1599) at St. Paul’s in Macao (Sunquist, 2001), mastering Mandarin and classical Chinese while adopting Chinese dress and customs. His training included geography, astronomy, and music—skills deemed essential for gaining imperial favor (Ramos Riera & Bonet Planes, 2024). Pantoja did not directly participate in the creation of the first Portuguese Chinese dictionary (Assunção, Neto & Fernandes, 2019). However, Diego de Pantoja was a close collaborator of Matteo Ricci and played a significant role in the Jesuit mission’s cultural and linguistic exchange efforts. He arrived in China later and worked extensively in Beijing, contributing to the dissemination of Western knowledge and the development of Chinese–Western dialogue (Folgado García, 2025).

According to Hsia (2016), the Jesuits’ goal was to get to Beijing, the capital. Their journey from Macao to Beijing (1583–1601) overcame political barriers by offering scientific knowledge. Ricci and Pantoja impressed Ming officials with maps, clocks, and astronomy, gaining access to the imperial court (Jesuits Europe, 2018). Matteo Ricci and Diego de Pantoja were the earliest Westerners granted permission to live within Beijing’s Forbidden City during the Ming dynasty. In 1601, Ricci received an invitation from the Wanli Emperor, who valued his knowledge of cartography, astronomy, and calendar reform. Pantoja joined Ricci on this mission and likewise entered the imperial court, where he played a role in fostering scientific and cultural dialogue. In Beijing, they reformed the calendar, translated Euclid, and promoted East-West dialogue. Ricci also translated Chinese-language religious texts and was the author of the famous world map 大瀛全图 Dà yíng quán tú in 1584, which placed China, the Middle Kingdom, at the center of the World Map (Yuan, 2012).

Ricci and Pantoja’s Macao years were foundational, transforming them from European clergy into literati capable of navigating Ming China’s intellectual world. Their linguistic rigor—Ricci’s lexicography and Pantoja’s epistolary records—and their scientific diplomacy redefined East-West engagement (University of Saint Joseph, 2024). Despite their contributions, rising anti-Christian sentiment in China at the time led to Pantoja’s expulsion in 1617. He died in Macao a year later. Ricci, buried in Beijing’s Zhalan Cemetery following a special imperial decree, became a symbol of enduring cultural respect (Sunquist, 2001; Hsia, 2016).

3.3 Drama game 1: Matteo Ricci’s first Portuguese Chinese dictionary.

This game is intended for students who are learning Chinese characters in the classroom. The approach is drama in education: The students are given

the historical contexts of Jesuit missionaries in Macao and perform a role while learning Chinese characters in a fun, embodied, and more engaging way.

Students’ Chinese level: all levels, with a focus on beginners.

Students’ ages: all ages.

Group Size: in pairs, and then the whole class plays together.

Duration: 30-40 minutes.

Objectives and Connection to Language Teaching

To help students better memorize the Chinese characters, their pinyin (transcription), and their meaning, a structured approach is needed. To acknowledge the Jesuits’ pioneering contributions to Chinese language learning and teaching.

Rules / Procedure

The teacher tells students they are Jesuits learning Chinese at the famous St. Paul’s College (Colégio de São Paulo) in Macao at the end of the 16th century. The students can choose to play the role of one of the four famous Jesuits mentioned before, that is, Matteo Ricci (利玛竇 Lì Mǎdòu), Michele Ruggieri (罗明坚 Luó Míngjiān), Diego de Pantoja (庞迪峨 Páng Dǐ’é), or Alessandro Valignano (范礼安 Fàn Lǐ’ān). They are going to create a dictionary together, starting with students working in pairs. Then the teacher tells them that each pair of students will be given two Chinese characters, along with the combination of these characters, their pinyin, and their meaning. They will have to create an entry for the dictionary in their target language (Portuguese, English, Spanish, etc.) with a drawing for each character. Once they have it, they must become the characters and prepare a silent performance that embodies the characters and their combination.

Give students around 10 minutes to prepare the drawings and the performance. Then the teacher asks for volunteers to demonstrate the process to the rest of the class. For example, a pair of students had to work on characters 8, 9, and 10: (8) 火 huǒ fire + (9) 山 shān mountain = (10) 火山 huǒ shān volcano. The students draw fire and a mountain on the blackboard, and then they use their bodies to perform a volcano, with movement and sounds, but no words. The other classmates must guess the meaning. At the end of the activity, the teacher will give them the whole “Macao dictionary” as in Table 3 below:

Character	Pinyin	Meaning	Mnemonic
1. 人	rén	person	Looks like a person walking with two legs apart.
2. 口	kǒu	mouth	A square opening — imagine a mouth wide open.
3. 人口	rénkǒu	population	A person and a mouth — people who speak make up a population.
4. 日	rì	sun; day	A window with a crossbar — think of the sun seen through a window.
5. 月	yuè	moon; month	Shaped like a crescent moon with lines marking its phases.
6. 明	míng	bright; clear	Sun + moon together — ultimate brightness.
7. 火	huǒ	fire	Flames rising upward — two sparks on the sides.
8. 山	shān	mountain	Three peaks in a row — a mountain range.
9. 火山	huǒshān	volcano	Fire on a mountain — a volcano erupting.
10. 木	mù	tree; wood	A trunk with branches — a tree in full form.
11. 休	xiū	to rest	A person leaning against a tree — resting in the shade.

Table 3: Jesuits Dictionary in Macao.

4. Macao’s World Heritage as Cultural Synthesis

Macao is a fantastic mix of cultures. For example, there is a special coexistence of religious worship: folk deities like Mazu (goddess of seafarers) were venerated alongside Catholicism, with processions incorporating both traditions (Barreiros, 1999). Beyond architecture, Macao nurtured a unique fusion practice, such as the integration of azulejos —Portuguese ceramic tiles (initially influenced by Islamic zellij from Morocco) — adorned Chinese temples and shops, creating a distinct Macanese decorative tradition (Daily Art Magazine, 2025).

The UNESCO-listed historic centre of Macao (inscribed 2005) embodies cultural entanglement. Its 22 monuments and eight squares fuse aesthetics: St. Paul’s Ruins (Christian motifs with Japanese craftsmanship), Na Tcha Temple (Taoist shrine abutting baroque church), and Moorish-style Lou Kau Mansion. This architectural ensemble constitutes China’s oldest, largest, and best-preserved Western architectural legacy (Macao Government Tourism Office, n.d.; UNESCO, 2005).

In this section, we will present 10 significant locations in Macao spanning 1525–2025 that will be part of the next dramatic activity.

4.1 A-Ma Temple (1488–present)

The oldest Taoist temple in Macao is dedicated to the seafaring goddess Mazu. Its construction began in 1488 (Ming Dynasty), and it expanded by 1828. The temple complex blends Confucian, Taoist, Buddhist, and folk elements, reflecting Macao’s syncretic spirituality. As we explained in section 2 of this paper, the name “Macao” derives from “A-Ma Gau” (Bay of A-Ma). The site remains active for worship and is part of the UNESCO World Heritage listing (UNESCO, 2005; Wordie, 2013).

4.2 Ruins of St. Paul’s (1602–1835)

Originally St. Paul’s College (1602–1640), the first Western university in Asia, and the adjacent Church of Mater Dei. The complex was destroyed by fire in 1835, leaving only its baroque façade—a fusion of European, Chinese, and Japanese craftsmanship. The façade features Christian icons alongside chrysanthemums (Japan) and peonies (China). Today, it symbolizes Macao’s Jesuit legacy and cultural hybridity (Meneses, 2016).

4.3 Senado Square (Largo do Senado) (16th c.–present)

Macao’s civic heart since the Portuguese settlement. The wave-patterned cobblestones and pastel Neo-Classical buildings (e.g., Leal Senado, Holy House of Mercy) reflect Mediterranean urban design. It hosted public events, markets, and protests, evolving into a UNESCO site representing Lusophone administrative and charitable institutions (Cultural Affairs Bureau of Macao SAR, 2005).

4.4 Guia Fortress (1622–1865)

A military complex built after the Dutch invasion attempt (1622). Includes Guia Chapel (1622) with frescoes merging Chinese and Western motifs, and Guia Lighthouse (1865)—China’s first modern lighthouse. The fortress’s strategic hilltop location underscores Macao’s colonial defense history. Controversies over urban development near the site (2007–2016) highlight heritage conservation challenges (Yu & Chan, 2014).

4.5 Mandarin’s House (1881–present)

The 60-room residence of Chinese reformer Zheng Guanying (1842–1921), blending Cantonese courtyard design with European features (French windows, false ceilings). It served as a clan compound and later fell into disrepair before restoration (2001–2010). It exemplifies Sino-Western aristocratic life and intellectual exchange (Cultural Affairs Bureau of Macao SAR, 2005).

4.6 St. Joseph’s Seminary and Church (1728–present)

Founded by Jesuits for training missionaries to China and Japan. Its church (1758) features a dome rivaling St. Paul’s and holds relics of St. Francis Xavier. The Seminary became a hub for Western science and linguistics, housing rare texts. It remains a key Catholic institution and UNESCO site (Pereira, 2010).

4.7 Dom Pedro V Theatre (1860–present)

Portuguese merchants funded Asia’s first Western-style theatre, which hosted opera, political assemblies, and charity events. The neoclassical green-and-white structure in St. Augustine’s Square symbolizes European cultural transplantation. Restored in 1993, it remains a performance venue (Coates, 2009).

4.8 Na Tcha Temple (1888–present)

A tiny Taoist temple dedicated to the child-God Na Tcha, built beside St. Paul’s Ruins after an 1888 plague. Its juxtaposition with Catholic ruins signifies religious coexistence. Annual festivals integrate processions and Cantonese opera, reflecting living traditions (Chan, 2019).

4.9 Lilau Square (Largo do Lilau) (16th c.–present)

Macao’s first Portuguese residential quarter, centered on a natural spring. The proverb “Drink from Lilau, never leave Macao” underscores its cultural mythmaking. Surrounding townhouses mix Portuguese tiles with Chinese brickwork, illustrating early settler life (Brockey, 2014).

4.10 Casino Lisboa (1970 – present).

Funded by Stanley Ho and partners, Casino Lisboa introduced European-style gaming to Macao and changed the city. It is also an iconic postmodern building in a prime location. Today, it is operated by SJM Holdings. It continues to serve as a cornerstone of Macao’s gaming scene, now flanked by the Grand Lisboa, which is a lotus-inspired skyscraper that epitomizes modern luxury and sophistication (Campos, 2012).

Gambling legalization (1850s) made Macao Asia’s sole casino jurisdiction until 2006. Today, casinos generate over 80% of government revenue and employ 30% of the workforce (Chen et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2015).

4.11 Drama game 2: Sound painting Macao.

This game is intended for students learning Chinese vocabulary. The approach is drama in education: Students are placed in several historical locations in Macao and use sounds to identify key places.

Students’ Chinese level: all levels, usually more suitable for beginners.

Students’ ages: all ages.

Group Size: a small group of 4-6 students, with guessing, and the whole class plays together.

Duration: 10-20 minutes.

Objectives and Connection to Language Teaching

To help students better memorize the vocabulary of locations in Chinese. To better discover a city or a location.

Rules / Procedure

4-6 students are blindfolded with masks or use their hands to cover their eyes. Their objective is to guess the location where the other classmates, who can see, will perform for them.

The teacher writes on the blackboard or on the PPT the list of 10 places that we studied about Macao: A-Ma Temple, Ruins of St. Paul’s, Senado Square

(Largo do Senado), Guia Fortress, Mandarin's House, St. Joseph's Seminary and Church, Dom Pedro V Theatre, Na Tcha Temple, Lilau Square (Largo do Lilau) and Casino Lisboa.

While the 4-6 students are blindfolded, the teacher silently points out one location to tell the rest of the classmates which one they will have to perform. It is better to time this activity to around 60 seconds. The teacher tells the blindfolded students before the start that they must listen silently for 60 seconds and try to guess the location; they are not allowed to speak while listening to their classmates. The teacher should give the signal to the rest of the classmates that the activity is starting, for example, saying "Start!" while clapping the teacher's hands. Now the rest of the classmates make sounds that you could hear in the selected location for around 60 seconds. They can use any object or part of their body to make the sounds, but they are not allowed to say words or sentences. After 60 seconds have passed, the teacher makes the signal "Finish!". Then the classmates stop making sounds, and the blindfolded group can finally take off their masks. The teacher asks them one by one, "Where are you?" and they guess the location. Finally, the teacher gives the answer, and they can play again or change to a new group of 4-6 students to be blindfolded and guess the location.

Also, you can play this game with sounds and words or sentences that people could use in the selected location. For example, if the location is Casino Lisboa, the classmates could say words such as:

"All in!" (the bold declaration at a poker table when a player pushes all their chips forward).

"Hit me." (the classic blackjack request for another card).

"Cash me out, please." (What you would say to a dealer or cashier when you are ready to turn chips back into money.)

This Sound painting drama activity is more difficult to guess if students use only sounds, but it is more challenging and engaging for students who can be more creative. If you play the game with words, it is much easier to guess, and students can also practice more words and sentences in the target language.

4.12 Drama Game 3: Mystery of the Theft at Casino Lisboa

This game is intended for students learning Chinese, but it could be easily adapted to any other language. The approach is drama in education: students are placed in the role of policemen or guests at the famous Casino Lisboa in Macao. A priceless object has been stolen from the casino, and the students must use their observation and Chinese language skills to solve the case.

Students' Chinese level: All levels can participate, but the activity is especially suitable for intermediate students who are familiar with prepositions, 把字句 (the Ba structure), 被字句 (passive voice in Chinese), and the particle 了 to express change.

Students' ages: all ages.

Group Size: 6–20 students, divided into two groups.

Duration: 30-40 minutes.

Objectives and Connection to Language Teaching Language Focus:

- Prepositions in Chinese (在, 上, 下, 里, 外, 旁边, etc.)
- The "Ba" structure 把字句 (e.g., 把门打开了 open the window)

- The Passive Voice in Chinese with "Bei" 被字句 (e.g., 门被打开了 the door was opened)
- Particle 了 to express change (e.g., 灯关了 the light is off)
- Skills:
- Speaking, listening, observation, teamwork, and memory.
- Cultural Awareness:
- Set in Macao, famous for its casinos and multicultural environment.

Rules / Procedure

1. Setting the Scene

- The classroom is set up to resemble a room in Casino Lisboa, with various objects (books, chairs, watches, bags, etc.) placed around.
- The teacher explains that a priceless object has been stolen, and the police (students) must investigate.

2. Group Division

- Divide the class into two groups: Group A (policemen) and Group B (guests/staff).
- Group A leaves the classroom after carefully observing the room and its objects for 2–3 minutes.

3. Making Changes

- While Group A is outside, Group B makes five changes in the room.

Examples:

- Move an object (e.g., 把椅子搬到门口)
- Open or close a window (e.g., 窗户被打开了)
- Turn on/off the lights (e.g., 灯关了)
- Exchange clothes, watches, wristbands, rings, etc. (e.g., 手表换了)
- Change the position of a bag (e.g., 书包放在桌子下了)

4. Investigation

- Group A returns and, together with Group B, discusses and tries to discover the five changes.
- All discussions and interactions among the students playing a role must be in Chinese, using the target structures.

Example Sentences

- Prepositions:
- 书包在椅子下。(The bag is under the chair.)
- 灯在门的上面。(The light is above the door.)
- The "Ba" structure 把字句:
- 把窗户打开了。(Opened the window.)
- 把椅子搬到桌子旁边了。(Moved the chair next to the table.)
- The Passive Voice in Chinese with "Bei" 被字句:
- 灯被关了。(The light was turned off.)
- 门被打开了。(The door was opened.)
- Particle 了 for change:
- 桌子换地方了。(The table has been moved.)
- 手表换人了。(The watch has a new owner.)

5. Swap Roles

- Groups switch roles and repeat the activity.

6. Debrief

- Teacher reviews the language used, corrects mistakes, and highlights good examples.

- Optionally, students can write a short police report in Chinese about the changes they discovered.
- The teacher should encourage creativity in making changes.
- For beginners, provide a list of helpful vocabulary and sentence patterns.
- For advanced students, add a role-play interrogation or written report.

5. Key Institutions and Figures in Drama in Education in Macao

Drama in Education in Macau has developed into a multifaceted field supported by government institutions, schools, universities, and community organizations. While historically viewed as an extracurricular or amateur activity, drama has increasingly been integrated into formal education and recognized as a powerful pedagogical tool for personal development, cultural expression, and social engagement (Chan, 2022).

5.1 Key Institutions of Drama in Education in Macao

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5.1 Key Institutions of Drama in Education in Macao

Before the 1990s, drama in Macau was primarily an amateur cultural activity, often used as an educational tool to transmit values and ideas. Local drama clubs and school theatre societies were the main venues for cultivating theatrical talent. The turning point came in 1989 with the establishment of the School of Theatre at the Macao Conservatory. As the only government-backed institution dedicated to professional theatre training, it has played a pivotal role in cultivating local talent and promoting drama as both an art form and an educational medium. The school's curriculum has evolved to include acting, directing, and stage production, and it collaborates with local and international artists to enrich its offerings (Chan, 2022).

At the tertiary level, the University of Macau (UM) and the University of Saint Joseph (USJ) have integrated drama into their educational frameworks. UM's Drama Society, under the Students' Union, has gained national recognition through original productions such as *Message*, which won awards at the 2024 Golden Hedgehog College Theater Festival. This success highlights the university's commitment to fostering student creativity and leadership in the performing arts (University of Macau, 2024).

USJ has also contributed to drama education through research and teacher training. A recent doctoral study by Leong Si Kei explored the use of Drama-in-Education (DiE) in secondary English classrooms, revealing both enthusiasm and challenges among local teachers. The study advocates systemic support to integrate DiE more effectively into Macau's secondary education (Leong, 2024).

At the secondary school level, Sheng Kung Hui Choi Kou School in Macau has been a pioneer in integrating drama into the curriculum. Educator Shihan Lin led a curriculum development project focused on Cantonese musical theatre, combining ensemble technique lessons, rehearsals, and performance-based assessments. This initiative not only enhanced students' artistic skills but also

promoted cultural appreciation and language learning (Lin, 2025).

In addition, one of the most innovative school-level initiatives is the Cantonese Musical Theatre Curriculum Project at Sheng Kung Hui Choi Kou School, Macau. Led by educator Shihan Lin, this project combines musical theatre with ensemble technique lessons and performance-based assessments. It demonstrates how drama can enhance language learning and cultural appreciation while fostering collaboration among students and educators. The project also involves collaboration with local artists and international educators, demonstrating the potential of community-driven curriculum development (Lin, 2025).

Another notable initiative is the Educational Drama Tour organized by CEM (*Companhia de Electricidade de Macau*). Since 2017, this program has brought interactive environmental-themed dramas to over 10,000 students across 17 primary schools. The performances are designed to be participatory, allowing students to engage directly with the content and themes such as sustainability and energy conservation (CEM, 2020).

5.2 Community Engagement and Social Impact of Drama in Macao

Community theatre in Macau has flourished alongside institutional efforts, often serving as a platform for cultural preservation and social dialogue. One notable example is the K.I. Drama Club, which focuses on producing original works by local playwrights and promoting "Macao Drama" as a distinct cultural form. These productions often explore themes of identity, history, and social change, and are staged in schools, community centers, and public spaces (Pun, 2012).

Community organizations have also played a vital role in expanding access to drama education. The Hiu Kok Drama Association, founded in 1975, is one of Macau's most prominent independent theatre groups. It operates the Hiu Kok Laboratory, a black box theatre that stages contemporary Cantonese productions and trains young performers (Macao Lifestyle, n.d.).

Drama has also been used as a tool for social work and youth development. A study by Lou and Chung (2018) documented a drama-based intervention that improved self-esteem and career outcomes among underperforming secondary students. This approach highlights drama's potential to support emotional and social growth in educational settings.

Community organizations and NGOs have also embraced drama as a tool for social development. For example, drama-based interventions have been used to support underperforming students, improve self-esteem, and foster career readiness. Lou and Chung (2018) documented such a program, demonstrating the potential of drama to address emotional and social challenges in educational settings. Furthermore, active local theatre groups (such as the Grey Tree Theatre Company, Rolling Puppet Alternative Theatre, and many more) and their artists provide diverse additions to Macau's drama ecosystem.

5.3 Macao's Government Support for Drama in Education

The Macao SAR Government has increasingly recognized the value of drama in education. Through the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau, it supports diverse school systems and encourages curricular innovation. The

government's commitment to 15 years of free education and its promotion of extracurricular activities have created a favorable environment for drama education to flourish (Government Information Bureau of the Macao SAR, 2023). In addition, the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao SAR Government's "Cultural Talks" program brings together professional tutors in various fields, including drama, dance, and design.

The Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao SAR Government has played a pivotal role in institutionalizing drama education. One of its flagship initiatives is the "Commissioning Performing Arts Productions" program, which funds original works by local theatre companies. In its latest round, six productions, including musicals, children's theatre, and experimental plays, were selected for premiere between 2025 and 2026. These productions receive full financial backing and logistical support, with the aim of positioning Macau as a "City of Performing Arts" and a hub for cultural exchange in the Greater Bay Area (Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao SAR Government, 2024).

Complementing this initiative is the Black Box Theatre at the Macao Cultural Centre, inaugurated in 2023. This state-of-the-art facility provides rehearsal and performance space for young artists and theatre groups. Designed with flexibility and accessibility in mind, the venue supports experimental and community-based productions, reinforcing the government's commitment to cultivating local talent and expanding cultural infrastructure. (Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao SAR Government, 2023).

Similarly, the Macao International Children's Arts Festival employs workshop-based and family-oriented pedagogical models (Macao News, 2025). It offers a wide array of programs, including theatre for babies, puppetry, and multimedia theatre, often incorporating "Children's Packages" that require adult accompaniment. This methodology emphasizes early artistic exposure and intergenerational learning, using drama as a tool for family bonding and creative development from a very young age (Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao SAR Government, n.d.).

Further policy support is embedded in the Macao Youth Policy (2021–2030), which is the Macao government's official framework for youth development (Education and Youth Development Bureau of the Macao SAR Government, 2021). It emphasizes comprehensive development, social participation, cultural literacy among youth, and the integration of arts education into both formal and informal learning. The policy encourages integration of arts education—including drama—into learning environments and supports youth associations that promote creative expression and civic engagement.

5.4 Influential Figures in Drama Education in Macao

Chao Shu Lei is widely recognized as a central figure in the development of drama education in Macao and is often described as the "Father of Theatre Drama" in the region. After completing his studies in Theatre Education in the United States, he established the School of Theatre at the Macao Conservatory and subsequently founded the Macao Fringe Club. Throughout his career, Chao has consistently promoted the creation of a distinct form of "Macao Drama" that embodies local cultural identity. His initiatives have highlighted the value of original playwriting and active community involvement in theatrical practice. In

recognition of his contributions, he received the Medal of Merit in Culture in 2004 (Pun, 2012).

The so-called "Macao Drama" movement has emerged as a defining strand within the territory's theatre landscape, characterized by its insistence on cultivating works that embody a distinctly local sensibility. Advocates such as Chao Shu Lei, together with groups like the K.I. Drama Club, have argued that institutional and financial support should prioritize plays written by Macao authors and rooted in the city's own cultural experience. This orientation reflects a conviction that theatre ought to serve as both a chronicle of Macao's social history and a mirror of its collective identity, rather than relying primarily on adaptations of foreign models (Pun, 2012).

Hui Koc Kun, widely known by his nickname "Big Bird," has played a central role in shaping Macao's contemporary theatre landscape as artistic director of the Hiu Kok Drama Association, one of the city's longest-standing independent companies. Under his leadership, the association has championed Cantonese-language theatre while also cultivating younger generations of performers. Through the Hiu Kok Laboratory—a small black box venue—Hui has fostered experimental and educational projects that actively involve youth and community participants. His efforts highlight the importance of sustaining local creativity and talent development in the face of pressures from more commercially driven entertainment (Cheong, 2023).

5.5 The Macao Fringe Festival

The Macao City Fringe Festival, organized by the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao SAR Government, is a prime example of community-engaged art. Its core concept, "All around the city, our stages, our patrons, our artists," drives a wide array of participatory methods that dissolve the line between artists and the public (Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao SAR Government, 2025).

The Macao City Fringe Festival offers a wide variety of **Immersive Performances**: Audiences become active participants in the city of Macao, whether roaming the city as in *Drifting Dairies*, shaping the story in *The Monster*, or joining Step Out's site-specific "performance walks." These walks—like *Lin Kai With No River* or *The Rise and Fall of Long Tin Troupe*—blend maps, street encounters, and ritualistic processions to connect people with local history and critique colonial legacies.

In addition, the festival offers Workshops and Co-Creation: skill-based sessions such as clowning or family acrobatics that foster creativity and bonding. At the same time, open platforms like the *Art Exhibition for All* invite public contributions and spontaneous improvisation, affirming the idea that anyone can be an artist.

5.6 Conclusion about Drama in Education in Macao.

A rich interplay of institutional support, school-based innovation, community engagement, and individual leadership shapes drama education in Macao. As the region continues to invest in cultural and educational development, drama will remain a vital tool for nurturing creativity, empathy, and civic responsibility among students.

Drama-in-Education in Macao is shaped by a rich interplay of institutional leadership, innovative school programs, influential educators, and community engagement. As the region continues to invest in cultural and educational development, DiE will remain a vital tool for nurturing creativity, empathy, and civic responsibility among students.

6. Conclusion: Macao as an Example of Dialogue Among Civilizations

According to Saxton (2024), Macao's exceptionalism lies not merely in hybridity but in its institutionalization of coexistence. Unlike colonial settings where dominant powers suppressed native cultures, Macao maintained dual governance where Chinese sovereignty and Portuguese administration coexisted through pragmatism—evidenced by Qing magistrates adjudicating Portuguese disputes. This generated what historian Ye Nong terms coexistence without assimilation (Ye, 2006).

Contemporary challenges—gambling dependency, Patuá decline, identity pressures—test this model. However, Macao's resilience endures through its UNESCO heritage stewardship, Lusophone diplomatic niche, and integration into the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. As Brazilian sinologist Giorgio Sinedino (2024) notes, Macao's bilingual graduates increasingly mediate China-Portugal exchanges, ensuring its "bridge" function persists post-colonialism.

Ultimately, Macao exemplifies how micro-territories can negotiate imperial pressures to forge enduring syntheses. Its streets—where azulejo tiles adorn Taoist temples and bacalhau shares menus with dim sum—remain monuments to intercultural possibility, offering the world a model of "harmony without uniformity" profoundly relevant in an age of civilizational tensions.

In this paper, we presented three illustrative dramatic activities designed to enhance language learning through the rich historical and cultural tapestry of Macao. Drama, as both an art form and a pedagogical tool, nurtures not only linguistic competence but also the cultivation of empathy, openness, and intercultural understanding. By inhabiting diverse roles, learners engage in perspective-taking that broadens their worldview and deepens their human connections. In an age increasingly shaped by technology, digital screens, and artificial intelligence, the presence of the arts in education becomes essential, reminding us of the distinctly human qualities that no machine can replicate. Thank you for having travelled this journey beyond the script, bringing to life Macao while unlocking language and culture through drama education, and affirming the arts as a vital bridge between language, culture, and the human spirit.

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The Role of Sustainable Art Pedagogies in Developing Creative Resilience

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Abstract

In an era of environmental degradation and climate consciousness, sustainable practices in education—particularly in the arts—have emerged as powerful tools for instilling ecological awareness and fostering creative resilience. This paper explores how sustainable art lesson plans, specifically those that incorporate natural, recycled, or ephemeral materials, not only contribute to environmental stewardship but also nurture risk-taking behaviours by reducing the pressure of permanence. From ephemeral practices such as painting with water on raw surfaces to material innovations like replacing synthetic adhesives with homemade plant-based glue in papier-mâché, these approaches help children connect with nature, challenge norms, and experiment freely. Drawing on theories of art education, environmental psychology, and pedagogical practice, the paper presents varied examples of sustainable projects that reposition the art room as a space of innovation, process-oriented learning, and transformation, offering students a low-stakes environment to explore, imagine, and reimagine.

Introduction

Sustainability in education has gained increasing importance over the past two decades, particularly in response to global ecological crises. Art education, long rooted in material exploration and personal expression, offers unique opportunities for integrating sustainable practices into teaching and learning (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). While the environmental benefits of using recycled and natural materials are well-recognised, this paper argues that sustainable art lesson plans also contribute meaningfully to the development of creative risk-taking in students. By removing the expectation of permanence and perfection, these lessons allow students to engage with the artistic process more freely and reflectively. Recent contemporary art exhibitions have further illuminated the potential of ephemeral and recycled materials as vehicles for environmental consciousness and creative inquiry. The São Paulo Biennial (2025), Kassel Documenta 15, and the Korea Biennial showcased numerous artists who reimaged waste, organic matter, and found objects as expressive mediums—transforming disposability into dialogue. Artists such as El Anatsui, known for his monumental installations made from discarded bottle caps, and Tadashi Kawamata, who constructs temporary architectures from reclaimed wood, exemplify this ethos of impermanence and renewal. Their practices highlight how transient materials can provoke reflection on consumption, sustainability, and the temporality of human impact on the environment.

This paper draws on constructivist and experiential learning theories (Dewey, 1934; Kolb, 1984) that emphasise the importance of hands-on engagement, reflection, and iteration in learning. Additionally, the concept of “slow pedagogy” in art education (Lindstrom, 2011) underscores the value of mindful making, material awareness, and environmental connection. Risk-taking, as framed by Hetland et al. (2007), is considered a core studio habit of mind and a necessary component of artistic growth. When students are not burdened by the expectation of creating a lasting, polished product, they are more inclined to take creative risks, embrace ambiguity, and persist through failure.

Sustainable Art Practices in the Classroom

Sustainable art practices involve the use of materials that are either naturally available, recycled, or destined for waste. These include cardboard, fabric remnants, bottle caps, dried leaves, scrap paper, and biodegradable adhesives. Beyond reducing waste, these materials carry a sense of impermanence that subtly alters student expectations and engagement. A prominent example is the act of painting with water on raw cement or tiled floors. The resulting images—often fleeting as they evaporate—invite students to experience art as a temporal expression rather than a static object. This transience, rather than diminishing the value of the work, elevates the process of making as the core of the learning experience.

Case studies

1. Painting with Water

In a recent classroom project, young learners were invited to use large brushes and bowls of water to “paint” on the raw stone floors of an open veranda. The activity required no pigments, paper, or expensive supplies—only imagination,

observation, and immediacy. As students created their calligraphic quotes on the floor, they quickly realised the temporary nature of their art. Within minutes, the images faded with the heat, creating a sense of wonder rather than frustration. This experience sparked a rich discussion about change, impermanence, and process. It also revealed the power of sustainable artmaking to engage students emotionally and intellectually without reliance on physical artifacts.





2. Nature mandala

Another compelling example involved the creation of mandalas using only fallen leaves, twigs, and flower petals. A mandala, derived from the Sanskrit word for “circle,” is a symbolic design used across many Eastern traditions—particularly in Hinduism and Buddhism—to represent harmony, unity, and the cyclical nature of life. Traditionally, mandalas serve as tools for meditation and spiritual reflection, emphasizing balance and interconnectedness between the individual and the cosmos.

Students worked outdoors in small groups, gathering materials respectfully from the environment without causing harm. Arranged on the ground, their symmetrical, colorful patterns connected students to both geometry and natural beauty while reflecting the spiritual and meditative essence of mandala-making. As wind and time naturally dismantled the designs, learners experienced first-hand how impermanence can be an integral—and beautiful—part of the artistic process.

3. Cardboard Sculptures

Older primary students engaged in a sustainable sculpture project using only cardboard boxes collected from home and school. Without glue or paint, they explored methods of cutting, folding, scoring, and interlocking the material to build abstract and functional forms. The limitations of the material encouraged creative problem-solving and iterative thinking. Several students reported feeling less intimidated to attempt ambitious structures, knowing that the cardboard was both abundant and easily recyclable. The temporary gallery of sculptures was displayed outdoors and later dismantled by students for re-use in future projects.



4. Biodegradable Clay Figures and Plant-Based Adhesives - In a unit exploring human connection with nature, students sculpted small figures using biodegradable clay made from flour, salt, and water. This simple mixture—long used by traditional artisans and craftspeople before the industrialization of art materials—reflects centuries-old knowledge of natural binders and pastes derived from kitchen and earth-based ingredients. Prior to the advent of synthetic glues and commercial modeling compounds, artists and builders across cultures relied on plant starches, animal glues, and mineral pigments to create sustainable, locally sourced materials. By reintroducing such pre-industrial methods, the project invited students to appreciate the ingenuity of earlier craft traditions that prioritized environmental harmony and material resourcefulness.

These figures were installed in the school garden, where they slowly dissolved or returned to the earth over time. The process opened dialogue about decay, natural cycles, and letting go. Students documented their figures' transformations through photography and weekly reflections, embracing the loss of their creations as part of a larger learning arc. Teachers noted increased emotional investment and resilience among students during the project.

Additionally, in another sustainable approach, students replaced synthetic adhesives like Fevicol with a plant-based glue made from boiled flour and water during papier-mâché activities. This glue, while slightly less durable, proved sufficient for lightweight sculptural forms and emphasized the biodegradable, safe-to-make aspect of the art process. The shift invited discussions about the environmental impact of everyday classroom materials and prompted students to question commonly accepted resources. Many students noted how this change made their work feel more connected to the earth and less harmful in the long term.

Risk-Taking and the Removal of Permanence

Conventional art education often emphasizes the finished product—one that can be displayed, evaluated, or preserved. This emphasis, while important in some contexts, can discourage students from experimenting or making bold choices for fear of “ruining” their work (Thompson, 2015). Sustainable art practices mitigate this fear by shifting the focus from end result to ongoing exploration. The impermanence of materials such as found objects or natural elements supports a mindset where failure is redefined as a step in learning. Students are encouraged to try new techniques, manipulate unfamiliar materials, and take aesthetic and conceptual risks without the weight of finality.

Environmental Awareness

Through Art In addition to promoting risk-taking, sustainable art lessons foster a deeper understanding of environmental issues. When students repurpose materials that would otherwise become waste, they engage in a form of ecological activism. They begin to see art not just as a form of self-expression, but as a practice of stewardship and care. Art educators play a crucial role in guiding students to reflect on the sources, life cycles, and potential reuse of their materials. This awareness contributes to the development of environmentally literate citizens who understand the impact of their choices.



Implications for Educators

Educators adopting sustainable art practices must be willing to rethink traditional metrics of success and value in the art classroom. Flexibility, process documentation, and reflective dialogue become central components of assessment. Moreover, educators must model comfort with ambiguity and change, showing students that art can be meaningful even when it leaves no physical trace. By creating an environment that honours experimentation and ecological mindfulness, teachers can nurture both the artistic and ethical dimensions of their students.

Conclusion

Sustainable art education offers more than an eco-friendly alternative to traditional art making—it redefines the role of art in learning. By embracing impermanence, educators can cultivate an environment where students feel safe to take risks, experiment freely, and engage deeply with the world around them. Practices like painting with water on stone floors or creating from recycled materials demonstrate that meaningful artistic expression need not rely on permanence. In fact, the fleeting nature of these works may be what makes them most powerful—reminding us that creativity, like the planet we inhabit, is a dynamic and ever-changing force.



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Dibujando trinos. Propuestas de educación artística basadas en las aves desde las artes plásticas, la música y el paisaje sonoro

Drawing Trills. Proposals for artistic education based on birds from the visual arts, music and soundscapes

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Resumen

La inspiración que la humanidad ha encontrado en la naturaleza es tan antigua e inherente a nuestra especie como lo es el origen mismo del pensamiento artístico. Multitud de ejemplos existentes en el registro arqueológico nos hablan del enorme valor didáctico otorgado por nuestros antepasados a la experiencia vivencial en el medio. Sin embargo, la desnaturalización propia de los habitantes de sociedades industrializadas y la irrupción de las tecnologías digitales han causado una desconexión generacional con los hábitats y sus especies que requiere ser estudiada y abordada. La creciente demanda de reconexión con lo natural mediante actividades de carácter educativo, fuera del aula y también de las pantallas, supone volver a los entornos naturales, que siguen siendo los lugares más ricos en recursos, matices y fuentes de inspiración. En este artículo se propone el acercamiento al universo de las aves comunes como elementos de estudio para el desarrollo de propuestas didácticas de carácter artístico, a través del análisis de algunos ejemplos desarrollados alrededor de su dibujo del

natural, el análisis de obras musicales y audiovisuales inspiradas en sus voces y sus cantos, y a la combinación interdisciplinar de estrategias para la implementación de propuestas didácticas en contextos de educación formal.

Palabras clave: educación artística, dibujo, paisaje sonoro, aves, investigación artística.

Abstract

The inspiration that humanity has found in nature is as ancient and inherent to our species as the very origin of artistic thought. Numerous examples in the archaeological record focus on the enormous educational value our ancestors bestowed upon the lived experience of the environment. However, the denaturalization inherent to the inhabitants of industrialized societies and the emergence of digital technologies have caused a generational disconnection from habitats and their species that requires study and addressing. The growing demand for reconnection with nature through educational activities, outside the classroom and also off screens, requires a return to natural environments. These continue to be the places richest in resources, nuances, and sources of inspiration. This article proposes an approach to the universe of common birds as study elements for the development of artistic teaching proposals, through the analysis of some examples. Drawing birds in their natural environment, analyzing musical and audiovisual works inspired by their voices and songs, and combining interdisciplinary strategies to implement teaching proposals in formal education contexts.

Keywords: art education, drawing, soundscape, birds, artistic research.

Érase una vez... la educación artística

La naturaleza ha sido una fuente primordial de inspiración para el ser humano desde los mismos orígenes del arte. De hecho, la expresión artística más antigua realizada por *Homo sapiens*, es la pintura de un jabalí verrugoso (*Sus celebensis*) datado con una antigüedad de 45.500 años (Brumm et al., 2021). Encontrado en la cueva de Sulawesi (Indonesia), forma parte de una escena en la que aparecen un total de 73 figuras de jabalíes, bóvidos y siluetas de manos humanas.

La necesidad de educar a futuros y futuras docentes de educación artística con una mentalidad receptiva y crítica pasa por encontrar referentes a los que aferrarse en su futuro profesional. En las últimas décadas, dichos referentes han estado excesivamente centrados en lo digital y en lo tecnológico (Huerta y Domínguez, 2020). Debemos preguntarnos qué nos impide volver inspirarnos en la naturaleza para crear (Ortega-Alonso, 2023). Y en el proceso, podemos incorporar las TIC sin convertirlas en las únicas y absolutas protagonistas. Cuestión aparte, a su vez, es la de abordar estas acciones no desde la dimensión ecológica del ocio (Cuenca, 2003) sino a través del aprovechamiento de «la espectacularidad y seducción visual de los fenómenos naturales» (Marín Viadel, 2003, p.3) como una de las zonas de máximo interés propias de la educación artística. En este trabajo se propone la exploración de territorios artísticos diversos con ejemplos de proyectos plásticos, visuales, sonoros y audiovisuales experimentales para su uso en contextos educativos.

La aprehensión del conocimiento a través de nuestros sentidos es una práctica tan pretérita como inherente a nuestra naturaleza. Utilizamos herramientas con las que anotar, reflejar, registrar y estudiar los hallazgos que encontramos en transectos, y debido a nuestra tendencia a la categorización y segregación de contenidos en casilleros de conocimiento independientes, lo denominamos de manera diferente según la rama del conocimiento en la que nos encontremos. En un mismo territorio, se puede hacer a la vez un muestreo de datos, una prospección arqueológica o una deriva (Debord, 1958), según el perfil profesional de quien lo realice. En el contexto de la educación artística, recientemente se ha planteado la perspectiva de las derivas paralelas. En ellas, docentes y alumnado pueden explorar simultáneamente lugares mediante recorridos observacionales y auditivos, para crear narrativas compartidas (Ramón y Alonso-Sanz, 2022).

Regresemos al origen mismo del arte figurativo del Paleolítico Superior. Las primeras manifestaciones plásticas de este periodo podrían estar estrechamente vinculadas con la pareidolia (Wisher et al., 2024), un fenómeno a priori tan eminentemente humano que depende de las capacidades perceptivas de los sujetos y de su sensibilidad (Zhou et al., 2021), sin embargo, es compartido con otros primates (Taubert et al., 2017). Estrechamente relacionada con la pareidolia precede otro fenómeno, la hierofanía, cuando lo sagrado se manifiesta en elementos ordinarios del entorno natural (Eliade, 1972). De aquellos albores del arte figurativo sólo han llegado hasta nuestros días objetos de piedra, marfil o hueso, y grabados y pinturas realizados en abrigos rocosos y cavernas. Además de evidenciarse una intencionalidad estética, se aprecia el complejo sistema de relaciones de estas sociedades con el entorno que habitaban y su marcado simbolismo intrínseco (Sanchidrián, 2001).

En el ámbito sonoro, si bien el significado de la música en su origen es «esencialmente ambiguo» (Cross, 2010, p. 13), resulta evidente la visceral impronta que lo natural le ha transmitido. Desde una perspectiva antropológica es posible plantear un principio de carácter mimético-mágico-rítmico mediante el cual la música surge por imitación (Montoya Campuzano, 2005). Además del carácter utilitario de la creación de instrumentos para imitar el sonido de otras especies animales con el fin de darles caza o establecer interacciones más complejas (Schaeffner, 1994), la práctica totalidad de las culturas se han inspirado en los sonidos de la naturaleza, relacionándolos con ciclos naturales o utilizándolos como mensajes con un marcado carácter espiritual o chamánico (Carpentier, 1978; Morley, 2013).

Las aves en el origen del arte

En el caso concreto de las aves, han constituido un eje simbólico y funcional clave en la construcción de experiencias estéticas, referentes tanto acústicos como visuales. Su influencia comienza en el aprovechamiento de las diversas partes de su cuerpo, como sucede en el arte plumario (Orellana, 2007), o la elaboración de los primeros instrumentos musicales complejos, aprovechando la neumaticidad de sus huesos. No obstante, su papel protagónico en los últimos y más actuales planteamientos audiovisuales de carácter experimental otorga a las aves un interés constante, capaz de trascender épocas.

Un ejemplo evidente de esta primitiva relación entre aves, música y tecnología es la flauta hallada en el yacimiento paleolítico de Hohle Fels, en Alemania (Conard et al., 2009), elaborada con el hueso radio de un buitre leonado (*Gyps fulvus*). Con una antigüedad estimada de 30.000 años, se trata de uno de los instrumentos más antiguos encontrados. Cuenta con cinco perforaciones que permiten la ejecución de una escala pentatónica, lo que sugiere un nivel avanzado de comprensión musical y una intencionalidad estética definida. El empleo de un resto anatómico de un ser volador para reproducir sonidos aéreos, etéreos, debe interpretarse en clave no sólo material, sino también simbólica¹.

Las riquísimas expresiones artísticas que surgieron en el Auriñaciense seguramente no habrían sido posibles sin la existencia de una diversidad cultural de las sociedades de la Europa de finales de aquel fascinante período (Praxmarer, 2023). Hasta el momento, no se han encontrado evidencias sólidas de almacenamiento simbólico consciente, ni de tradiciones musicales anteriores al Paleolítico Superior (D'Enrico et al., 2003), ni tampoco existen evidencias anteriores de arte figurativo.

Inspiración aviar en expresión artística

Proponemos un recorrido atemporal por diversos proyectos artísticos que encuentran en la intersección entre aves, artes plásticas, sonoras y audiovisuales y la tecnología los ingredientes necesarios para su desarrollo. Comencemos por un trabajo que sirve como referente artístico para articular una propuesta didáctica, y en definitiva, cultural, que vincula aves, artes plásticas y sonoras. Nos referimos al disco de David Holland junto con Anthony Braxton, Sam Rivers y Barry Altschul, publicado en 1973 para el sello ECM, titulado *Conference of the birds*. Considerado por la mayoría de medios musicales especializados como una de las obras cumbre del denominado jazz de vanguardia, el título alude a la obra del poeta y místico persa Farid al Din Attar (siglos XII-XIII). Para su portada, Holland escogió una ilustración del pájaro de la lluvia de la cultura nativa norteamericana de los Pueblo (Mera, 1971).



Figura 1. Portada del disco *Conference of the birds*. Fuente: <https://ecmrecords.com/product/conference-of-the-birds-david-holland-quartet/> 84

En este disco se mezclan con naturalidad el misticismo sufí, la tradición gráfica de los Pueblo y la inspiración en el canto de las aves. A este respecto, es muy probable que David Holland se inspirase en el canto de los mirlos londinenses al alba, para componer las líneas maestras de *Conference of the Birds*. Holland lo recoge en la contraportada del disco:

«While living in London I had an apartment with a small garden. During the summer around 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning, just as the day began, birds would gather here one by one and sing together, each declaring its freedom in song. It is my wish to share this same spirit with other musicians and communicate it to the people» (Holland, 1972).

La recuperación de reminiscencias plásticas de culturas como la de los Pueblo no es una cuestión anecdótica de los años setenta. La fascinación por las expresiones artísticas primigenias suscita un interés cada vez más multidisciplinar: investigadores e investigadoras de diversas ramas de la ciencia y las artes encuentran en el arte antiguo el lugar ideal donde encontrar respuestas a múltiples preguntas, y también el espacio en el que plantear nuevos retos desde la creatividad con finalidad educativa.

Un ejemplo concreto lo encontramos en el proyecto Ancient Art Archive², dedicado en un principio a registrar fotográficamente, y posteriormente con modelado 3D y realidad virtual, el arte rupestre de Norteamérica (incluidos los Pueblo), y posteriormente el del resto del mundo, con un marcado carácter didáctico. Prueba de ello es la publicación de su archivo en la plataforma Google Arts & Culture³ y el desarrollo de guías didácticas que incluyen materiales pedagógicos digitales, creaciones artísticas y exposiciones (Simek et al., 2022).

Otro ejemplo ubicado en un contexto educativo y museístico es el de la exposición *Blocbirds*, que se realizó en el Museo de Historia Natural de Rotterdam, en Países Bajos (Mulder, 2021). La muestra proponía un diálogo entre lo digital y lo analógico que resulta realmente efectivo. Por un lado, situaron un conjunto de 25 aves naturalizadas de la colección de taxidermia del museo, escogidas por su carácter común en el territorio. Frente a las mismas, ubicaron un total de 25 piezas que mostraban mapas de bits con los colores más representativos de cada una de dichas aves, conformando una composición de 5 x 5 que acentuaba aún más la idea de los píxeles, haciendo especial hincapié en los porcentajes de color existentes, las proporciones relativas y su distribución en el plumaje de cada especie. El ejercicio visual es extremadamente efectivo, pudiéndose apreciar a simple vista de qué ave se trata por sus colores, favoreciendo la retentiva y la identificación mediante sensaciones y percepciones (Ellis, 2011; Lerner y Tunón, 2012).

¹ En un reciente documental (10/11/2025), realizado por Eugenio Monesma, puede apreciarse cómo se fabrica una chuflaina de hueso de ala de buitre, de tradición pastoril pirenaica, en este caso de 6 agujeros y con boquilla de caña. Dicho documental puede verse en el siguiente enlace: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARWhKrodEyQ>

² <https://www.ancientartarchive.org/> [Fecha de consulta: 07/07/2025].

³ <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/ancient-art-archive> [Fecha de consulta: 07/07/2025].



Figura 2. BLOCBIRDS. Fuente: <https://blocbirds.com/discover-blocbirds>

La propuesta de Mulder y Buring parte de una premisa centrada en sintetizar hasta el extremo (en este caso, de color) la información a partir de la que se puede identificar un ave. Ese ejercicio puede transferirse al ámbito de la pintura o del dibujo del natural, que al combinar su potencial descriptivo y retentivo, ofrece múltiples posibilidades didácticas.

Las aves cantoras cuentan con un órgano vocal especializado denominado siringe, mediante el cual pueden emitir trinos complejos y melodiosos de gran riqueza tonal y variedad rítmica (Rothenberg, 2006). Probablemente el compositor más paradigmático que se ha basado en el canto de los pájaros sea Olivier Messiaen, tan fascinado por sus voces que transcribió a partituras las melodías de las aves que escuchaba en sus viajes por todo el mundo. Ya en 1952, veinte años antes del disco de Holland, Messiaen compuso una pieza llamada *Le merle noir*, basada en el canto del mirlo, como partitura para las pruebas de acceso al Conservatorio de París en el instrumento de flauta (Hill y Simeone, 2005). Posteriormente, su *Catalogue d'oiseaux* incluyó composiciones basadas en el canto de un total de 77 especies de aves, en siete libros conformados por trece piezas nombradas con aves representativas de Francia, consideradas como "solistas" de cada una (Tabla 1).

Tabla 1. Catalogue d’oiseaux de Olivier Messiaen.

Libro	Título	Especie solista	Nombre científico
Libro 1	I. <i>Le Chocard des Alpes</i>	Chova piquigualda	<i>Pyrrhocorax graculus</i>
	II. <i>Le Lorient</i>	Oropéndola europea	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
	II. <i>Le Merle bleu</i>	Roquero solitario	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>
Libro 2	IV. <i>Le Traquet Stapazin</i>	Collalba rubia	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>
Libro 3	V. <i>La Chouette Hulotte</i>	Cárabo común	<i>Strix aluco</i>
	VI. <i>L'Alouette Lulu</i>	Alondra totovía	<i>Lullula arborea</i>
Libro 4	VII. <i>La Rousserolle Effarvatte</i>	Carricero común	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
Libro 5	VIII. <i>L'Alouette Calandrelle</i>	Terrera común	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>
	IX. <i>La Bouscarle</i>	Cetia ruiseñor	<i>Cettia cetti</i>
Libro 6	X. <i>Le Merle de roche</i>	Roquero rojo	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>
Libro 7	XI. <i>La Buse variable</i>	Busardo ratonero	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
	XII. <i>La Traquet rieur</i>	Collalba negra	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>
	XIII. <i>Le Courlis cendré</i>	Zarapito real	<i>Numenius arquata</i>

Fuente: Elaboración propia.

Aves, propuestas artísticas educativas y TIC

La incorporación de herramientas de tecnología digital avanzada aporta una nueva materialidad didáctica que puede incorporarse en propuestas de educación artística. La existencia de software capaz de producir animaciones interactivas en tiempo real tanto en 2D como en 3D, ha ampliado los horizontes de las prácticas artísticas intermedia, mediante composiciones visuales algorítmicas a partir de sonidos, o a la inversa, o patrones fractales cuyos nodos pueden asociarse a sonidos para producirla. Un ejemplo reciente de la aplicabilidad de estas tecnologías la podemos encontrar en el trabajo de Lucio Arese y sus grabaciones de aves comunes mientras están cantando o emitiendo sus reclamos. Posteriormente, construye intrincadas representaciones visuales tridimensionales mediante el uso de Touchdesigner⁴, software de programación visual basado en nodos que genera contenido multimedia interactivo en tiempo real mediante controles de pantalla externos, datos MIDI y otros dispositivos de entrada con alta interoperabilidad e integración (Mu-Hyun, 2022).

⁴ <https://derivative.ca/> [Fecha de consulta: 07/07/2025]

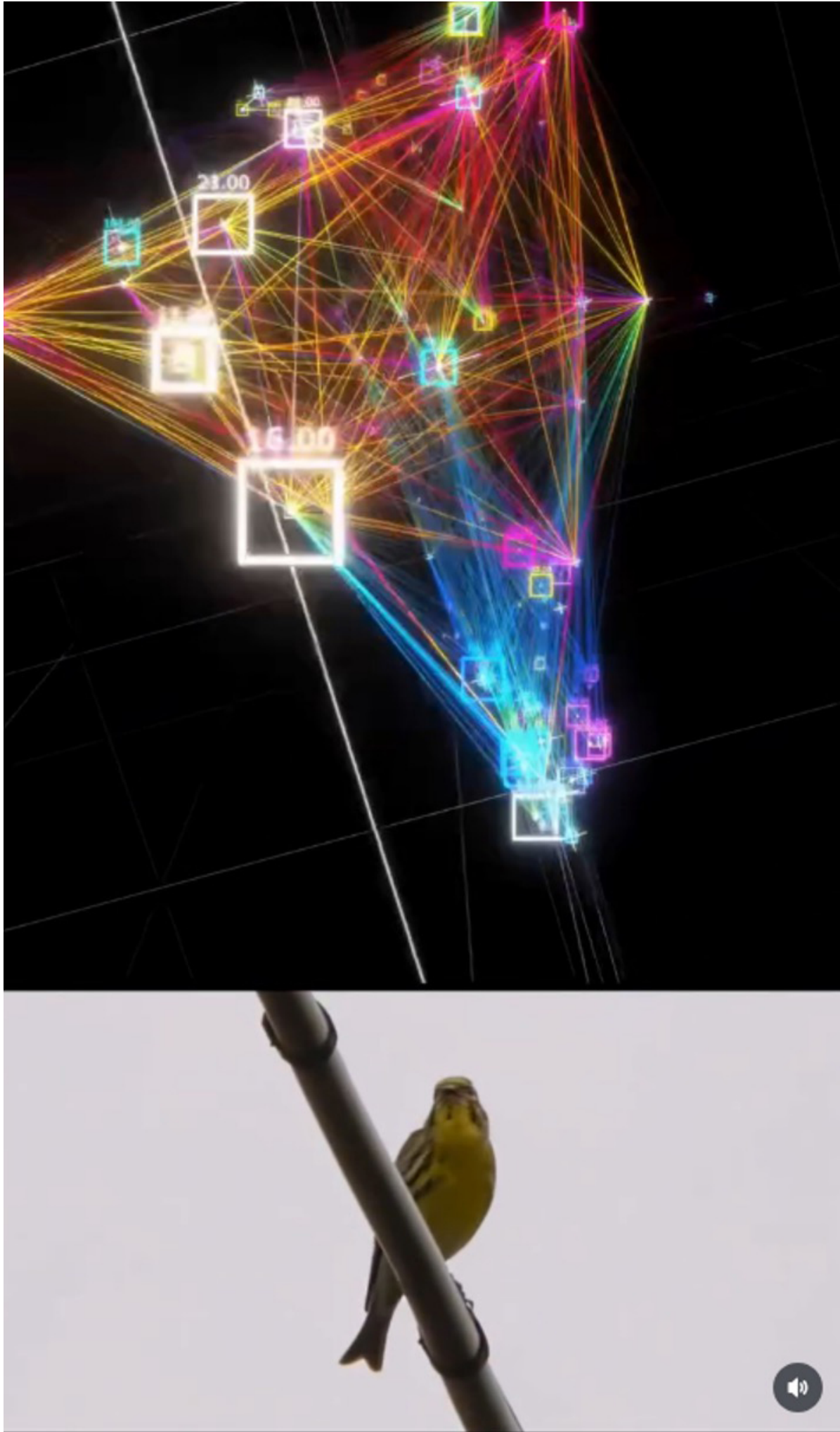


Figura 3. Análisis visual del canto del serín verdicillo (Serinus serinus) con Touchdesigner. Fuente: <https://www.instagram.com/lucioarese/>

De modo inverso al de las sonificaciones, que transforman las imágenes en sonidos (Ortega-Alonso et al., 2024), Arese transforma el sonido de los pájaros en representaciones gráficas tridimensionales que combina con los registros audiovisuales de las aves que los emiten.

Touchdesigner también se ha usado en el diseño de propuestas interactivas y narrativas transmediales para la concienciación educativa del público infantil sobre la conservación de aves urbanas (Wang, 2023; Xu et al., 2025). Incluso, en creaciones artísticas basadas en el canto de las aves, combinando arte, tecnología, educación científica y patrimonio en contextos educativos (Landa, 2025).

No obstante, el dibujo a mano alzada y del natural constituyen un medio omnipresente desde una perspectiva tanto histórica como cultural, siendo igualmente una herramienta flexible y accesible para exteriorizar y preservar nuestros pensamientos (Mukherjee, 2024). Se trata de una actividad íntimamente relacionada con la noción de transferencia (Pimentel, 2004) que es fácilmente extrapolable en un contexto educativo deficitario de experiencias directas en la naturaleza. Esto se refleja tanto el desconocimiento como el interés del alumnado que participa en este tipo de actividades (Morón-Monge et al., 2021), ávido de visitar entornos naturales para volver a dibujar, narrar dibujando, jugar dibujando, concienciar dibujando, dibujarlo todo y dibujar para pensarnos (Blanco y Cidrás, 2020).

Propuesta aviar en educación artística basada en el dibujo y el reconocimiento del paisaje sonoro

En la siguiente exploración artística se propone la realización de prácticas multidisciplinares centradas en la figura de aves comunes presentes en la península Ibérica. El carácter migratorio de algunas de estas especies nos permite hablar del concepto del viaje, de lo transfronterizo, de la capacidad de tender puentes entre culturas y territorios a partir de la observación de lo natural (Ortega-Alonso y Soto-Moreno, 2024). La realización de actividades basadas en las artes plásticas y sonoras con estas aves, lejos de ser redundante, se torna oportunidad. A nivel técnico, la versatilidad es fundamental en el empleo de las herramientas necesarias para llevar a cabo su registro gráfico en un cuaderno de campo (Muir Laws, 2012; Varela, 2022). A las herramientas habituales que suelen utilizarse para el desarrollo de apuntes del natural, como son lápices, acuarelas, tintas, o pinceles, se unen herramientas para la identificación de las diferentes especies como son las guías ilustradas o las recientes aplicaciones móviles. Una de ellas es Aves de España⁵, de Seo Birdlife. De carácter gratuito, ofrece enormes posibilidades desde un ámbito didáctico en contextos educativos diversos (Torralba Burrial y Herrero Vázquez, 2016).

⁵ La aplicación Aves de España está disponible para su descarga en la web de SEO Birdlife: <https://seo.org/guia-de-aves> [fecha de consulta: 03/07/2025]



Figura 4. Imagen del taller Cuadernos de campo: dibujo y pintura de la naturaleza. 37.º Encontro APECV. Centro de Arte Contemporâneo Quinta da Cruz de Viseu (Portugal) 2025.. Fuente: APECV.

La propuesta está pensada para ser realizada en primavera, cuando las aves dejan de lado su habitual discreción para dejarse llevar por un entusiasmo propio del período de celo. Aunque se puede escoger cualquier tipo de hábitat, en esta propuesta nos hemos centrado en el bosque de ribera y sus inmediaciones, que asegura una riqueza ornitológica propia de estos entornos. La actividad que se muestra como ejemplo de propuesta didáctica (Figura 4) se desarrolló en la Quinta da Cruz, el Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Viseu (Portugal), que a su vez es la sede de la Associação de Professores de Expressão e Comunicação Visual (APECV).

El contexto fue un taller realizado en el 37.º Encontro da APECV en mayo de 2025. Consistió en una deriva paralela en la que profesor y alumnado recorren un espacio natural, provistos de cuaderno de dibujo y la guía de identificación de aves. Se trata de una actividad que profundiza en el conocimiento del entorno y supone que quienes participan han de utilizar todos los sentidos durante la experiencia. La actividad no tiene un recorrido trazado, ni tampoco unos objetivos concretos. No es una gamificación en la que hay unos logros estipulados, tampoco hay un plan definido. Las aves no se ubican en determinados lugares para ser encontradas. Los

participantes se encuentran ante la caótica verdad de la naturaleza, el desorden ordenado de sus nodos. La invisible urdimbre que conecta a todos los seres que la habitan es la que articula los procesos sensoriales que auxilian la reconexión, acaso perdida por el exceso de asfalto, luz artificial y mobiliario ergonómico.

La actividad cobra sentido cuando en el paisaje sonoro de la foresta ribereña se escucha el nervioso, agudo y repetitivo reclamo del reyezuelo listado (*Regulus ignicapilla*), el melodioso gorjeo del mirlo (*Turdus merula*), el aflautado trino de la oropéndola (*Oriolus oriolus*) o la riqueza musical del ruiseñor (*Luscinia megarhynchos*), entre otra multitud de reclamos, cantos, graznidos y sonidos diversos. En el caso del reyezuelo y del mirlo, se trata de sonidos habituales durante cualquier época del año al tratarse de especies que habitan permanentemente los territorios en los que se encuentran. En el caso de la oropéndola y el ruiseñor, sin embargo, los períodos en los que se puede disfrutar de su presencia y de su canto se enmarcan en los períodos primaveral y estival, al tratarse de especies migratorias que regresan de su migración transahariana para reproducirse en Europa, antes de regresar a finales de verano a sus cuarteles de invierno. Los caminos que se trazan en estas derivas paralelas confluyen en lugares de encuentro y de comunicación.



Figura 5. Apuntes del natural con lápiz y acuarelas de un ejemplar de reyezuelo listado (*Regulus ignicapilla*). 37.º Encontro APECV. Centro de Arte Contemporâneo Quinta da Cruz de Viseu (Portugal) 2025. Fuente: elaboración propia.

Conclusiones

El desarrollo de prácticas artísticas centradas en la naturaleza como fuente de inspiración permite retomar la idea de una educación basada en la sostenibilidad y el conocimiento de un entorno que necesita ser respetado y puesto en valor ante la creciente masificación de las ciudades y, consiguientemente, la desnaturalización de las personas (Solís-Espallargas y Morón-Monge, 2020). Este conocimiento sirve a su vez para centrar el foco en la importancia de conservar y recuperar tanto hábitats naturales como sus especies, desde una perspectiva educativa a todos los niveles, para protegerlas y ponerlas en valor. La promoción de situaciones de enseñanza y aprendizaje de carácter experiencial, en contextos reales y naturales, favorece el desarrollo de una actitud consciente, y participativa ante los retos y desafíos de la actualidad (Morón-Monge et al., 2021). Al considerar el mundo que nos rodea como un marco de referencia estético, podemos hacer que las prácticas artísticas sean la herramienta con la que construir nuevas formas de vivir experiencias (Eisner, 2004).

No queda lejos uno de los acontecimientos más relevantes en cuanto a la contaminación sonora (o más bien su ausencia), en el que la naturaleza recuperó un terreno otrora perdido. La pandemia de la COVID-19 supuso el confinamiento en sus domicilios de millones de personas, lo que supuso la reducción del nivel de ruido hasta niveles que, en el caso de algunas ciudades superpobladas, retrocedió a los niveles de la década de 1950 (Derryberry et al., 2020). Las personas tuvieron que confinarse, que enjaularse como se enjaulan a las aves cantoras. Los sonidos de la naturaleza recuperaron su territorio, y la posibilidad de volver a escuchar los cantos de las aves nos hizo «moldear nuestra pertenencia y vinculación a un lugar» (Cortés Zulueta, 2021, p. 21).

Mediante la integración de herramientas tecnológicas y digitales en los procesos, se pueden utilizar los recursos obtenidos directamente de la naturaleza para generar nuevas formas de creación artística basadas en la instalación interactiva (Xu et al., 2025). La utilización de biomarcadores en la confluencia de proyectos que vinculan arte, ciencia y tecnología están en disposición de aportar una visibilidad social a los problemas ecosistémicos actuales (Lega Lladós, 2025).

Más recientemente, hemos tenido otro caso paradigmático como fue el apagón eléctrico sucedido el 28 de abril de 2025, que afectó a España peninsular, Portugal continental y Andorra, además de algunas zonas del sur de Francia. Una población de alrededor de 54 millones de habitantes, de repente se encontró durante casi todo un día con una ausencia de estímulos artificiales que nos permitió reconectar con el entorno natural. No son pocos los registros a posteriori de personas que, maravilladas por la belleza de los cielos nocturnos en las ciudades peninsulares, se dedicaron a contemplar una inmaculada bóveda celeste que, en territorio europeo, no se podía contemplar desde finales del siglo XIX. Aquel día, la gente no solo salió a la calle a conversar, o a hacer sus quehaceres como hacía antes de la llegada de Internet. También, muchos aprovecharon para reconectar con la naturaleza, escucharla, disfrutar de un entorno natural privilegiado como en el que nos encontramos.

Se torna fundamental promover herramientas, actividades y propuestas que promuevan un (re)acercamiento de las personas hacia los entornos naturales. No se trata tanto de humanizar entornos como de (volver a) naturalizar a la humanidad, pues solamente desde su conocimiento se puede respetar la naturaleza y, por consiguiente, actuar en aras de la sostenibilidad, reduciendo el insostenible impacto que actualmente generamos.

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La creación audiovisual en el aula: el stop motion como recurso pedagógico

Audiovisual Creation in the Classroom: Stop Motion as a Pedagogical Resource

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Resumen

En la sociedad actual, dominada por la imagen y los lenguajes digitales, la escuela enfrenta el reto de integrar prácticas que conecten con los intereses y realidades del alumnado. Entre ellas, la producción audiovisual basada en la técnica del stop motion emerge como un recurso pedagógico de gran potencial, no solo para fomentar la creatividad, sino también para favorecer procesos de alfabetización mediática y audiovisual que resultan determinantes en la formación ciudadana. Este artículo explora la justificación de su uso en el aula, sus posibilidades educativas y sus limitaciones, articulando experiencias docentes con marcos teóricos contemporáneos de la educación artística, el aprendizaje cooperativo y la alfabetización mediática. Se analiza, asimismo, su potencial transferible a otros niveles y contextos educativos, subrayando su valor como estrategia de innovación didáctica orientada a la construcción crítica del conocimiento, la expresión visual y la cooperación entre iguales.

Palabras clave: stop motion, educación artística, alfabetización mediática y audiovisual, aprendizaje cooperativo

Abstract

In today's society, dominated by imagery and digital languages, schools face the challenge of integrating practices that connect with students' interests and realities. Among these, audiovisual production based on the stop-motion technique emerges as a pedagogical resource of great potential—not only to foster creativity, but also to promote processes of media and audiovisual literacy that are essential in citizenship education. This article examines the rationale for its classroom use, its educational possibilities, and its limitations, linking teaching experiences with contemporary theoretical frameworks in art education, cooperative learning, and media literacy. It also analyzes its transferable potential to other educational levels and contexts, highlighting its value as an innovative didactic strategy aimed at the critical construction of knowledge, visual expression, and peer collaboration.

Keywords: Stop motion, Art education, Media and audiovisual literacy, Cooperative learning

Resumo

Na sociedade contemporânea, dominada pela imagem e pelas linguagens digitais, a escola enfrenta o desafio de integrar práticas que se conectem aos interesses e às realidades dos estudantes. Entre elas, a produção audiovisual baseada na técnica do stop motion destaca-se como um recurso pedagógico de grande potencial — não apenas por estimular a criatividade, mas também por favorecer processos de alfabetização midiática e audiovisual que são fundamentais na formação cidadã. Este artigo discute a justificativa para o seu uso em sala de aula, suas possibilidades educativas e suas limitações, articulando experiências docentes com referenciais teóricos contemporâneos da educação artística, da aprendizagem cooperativa e da alfabetização midiática. Analisa-se ainda o seu potencial de aplicação em outros níveis e contextos educacionais, ressaltando seu valor como estratégia de inovação didática voltada à construção crítica do conhecimento, à expressão visual e à cooperação entre pares.

Palavras-chave: Criação audiovisual, Stop motion, Educação artística, Alfabetização midiática e audiovisual, Aprendizagem cooperativa

La imagen y la alfabetización audiovisual en la educación

En el contexto social y educativo contemporáneo, la imagen se ha consolidado como un pilar fundamental que estructura tanto la vida cotidiana como las prácticas pedagógicas. Como señalaba Marín-Viadel (2005), 'las imágenes constituyen la base desde donde los individuos contemporáneos construimos nuestra forma de vida' (p. 15), configurando no solo nuestra manera de entender el mundo, sino también de construir nuestra identidad. Esta centralidad de lo visual es, sin duda, una de las características más representativas de la posmodernidad.

Las nuevas generaciones, criadas en un entorno digital marcado por Internet y las redes sociales, forman parte de la denominada sociedad en red, civilización de la imagen o sociedad digital. Se ha descrito a estos jóvenes utilizando distintos términos o etiquetas como nativos digitales (Prensky, 2001), generación

app, generación Z, e incluso generación multitarea. Estas etiquetas, aunque discutibles, evidencian una realidad: los jóvenes no solo consumen contenidos, sino que también los crean y comparten, en el contexto de una cultura participativa (Jenkins, 2009). Conceptos como prosumidor o emirec ilustran este fenómeno pero, como señala Alonzo (2019), aunque a veces se empleen como sinónimos, no siempre son equivalentes.

Más allá de la controversia terminológica, lo relevante es reconocer que, en muchos casos, la escuela permanece ajena a estas prácticas culturales y comunicativas. En mi experiencia docente en educación artística, he podido constatar la falta de alfabetización mediática y audiovisual en gran parte del alumnado. De ahí que sea urgente impulsar proyectos que refuercen la comprensión y la capacidad crítica de la ciudadanía ante los discursos visuales contemporáneos. Como señala Marfil-Carmona (2016), 'trabajar para la alfabetización visual y audiovisual es una actuación resultante de la responsabilidad social que conlleva dedicarse a la educación artística y a la enseñanza de los medios de comunicación' (p.28)

Sin embargo, la escuela todavía se encuentra con frecuencia al margen de estas prácticas culturales y comunicativas. En la docencia en Educación Artística, la falta de alfabetización mediática y audiovisual del alumnado se traduce en una comprensión superficial de los lenguajes visuales contemporáneos. Por ello, urge diseñar proyectos educativos que fortalezcan la competencia crítica ante los discursos visuales y que integren la cultura mediática en los procesos de aprendizaje. Como señala Marfil-Carmona (2016), 'trabajar para la alfabetización visual y audiovisual es una actuación resultante de la responsabilidad social que conlleva dedicarse a la Educación Artística y a la enseñanza de los medios de comunicación' (p. 28).

Desde esta perspectiva, la alfabetización mediática no debe entenderse únicamente como la adquisición de destrezas técnicas, sino como un proceso de comprensión y producción crítica de significados (Buckingham, 2003; Kellner & Share, 2007). La educación artística se convierte así en un espacio privilegiado para el desarrollo de esta competencia, al promover la lectura activa de las imágenes, la interpretación simbólica y la creación de discursos visuales propios.

La creación audiovisual en el aula

Más allá de concebirse como una actividad meramente recreativa, la producción audiovisual en el ámbito escolar se configura como un proceso formativo complejo que requiere una adecuada planificación, diseño y compromiso. La elaboración de un producto audiovisual, tanto de manera individual como colectiva, implica fases que demandan concentración, organización y disciplina, especialmente en el marco del trabajo colaborativo.

En este proceso no solo se trabajan contenidos curriculares de carácter conceptual, sino también capacidades y actitudes esenciales, tales como la paciencia, la escucha activa y la capacidad de planificación. Tal como apunta Luna (2008), estas prácticas favorecen hábitos de regulación y estrategias de aprendizaje que convierten la creación audiovisual en un vehículo privilegiado para la resolución de problemas. Ambròs y Breu (2011) sostienen que la creación audiovisual impulsa el desarrollo de las distintas competencias básicas y promueven la construcción activa del propio conocimiento.

Para Augustowsky (2019), la experiencia de la creación audiovisual debería estar presente en la formación de todo estudiante, ya que constituye una vivencia irremplazable en la que se integran cognición, emoción, imaginación y registro sensible del entorno. Pero, además, responde a una función central de la escuela: democratizar saberes y prácticas culturalmente valiosas. En este sentido, la producción audiovisual en el aula no se limita a desarrollar competencias técnicas, sino que permite a los estudiantes explorar su identidad y expresarse de manera significativa.

En consecuencia, la producción audiovisual escolar se erige como un medio de exploración identitaria y expresión significativa. La educación artística se transforma así en una herramienta para comprender la cultura visual y tecnológica contemporánea, dotando al alumnado de herramientas para construir, cuestionar y compartir su visión del mundo (Ventura-Chalmeta, 2023).

El stop motion en la práctica educativa: ventajas e inconvenientes.

Si nos centramos en la técnica del stop motion, podemos afirmar que esta recoge y amplifica las potencialidades de la creación audiovisual en general, ofreciendo un campo fértil para la educación artística y mediática. Su uso en el aula se ha visto favorecido en los últimos años por la incorporación de dispositivos digitales accesibles, como móviles y tabletas, que facilitan la producción de animaciones. Tal como señalan diversos autores (Ventura-Chalmeta, 2023), la proliferación de proyectos educativos basados en esta técnica responde tanto a su carácter lúdico y creativo como a su idoneidad para trabajar la alfabetización audiovisual y digital. Las prácticas docentes basadas en la producción de animaciones stop motion tienen grandes defensores, como el caso del destacado profesor y pedagogo Martínez-Salanova, que junto con Pérez destaca su fácil implementación al ser una técnica económica, adaptable a múltiples temáticas y accesible incluso para quienes carecen de formación en el dibujo. Su ejecución se fundamenta, por tanto, en las dosis creativas de todos los participantes: los infantes y los adultos que coordinan y dirigen la actividad (Martínez-Salanova & Pérez, s.f.b). Para Ambròs y Breu (2011), la realización de este tipo de audiovisual es, además, especialmente indicado en la etapa de la educación primaria como proyecto creativo, dado que no solo ayuda a la comprensión de producciones animadas, sino que además potencia la creatividad e imaginación y la paciencia, así como la experimentación con los procesos. El aprendizaje a través de la experiencia es también una de las máximas de la pedagogía, tal y como sostuvieron Dewey y Freinet.

La investigación previa llevada a cabo (Ventura-Chalmeta, 2023) analiza distintos textos académicos y experiencias educativas sustentadas en la enseñanza a partir de la producción de audiovisuales stop motion en las aulas de distintos niveles académicos. A partir de los mismos se ha establecido una tabla en la que se muestran los resultados más destacados sobre los beneficios y las limitaciones del uso del stop motion en el aula, organizada atendiendo a las siguientes dimensiones: pedagógica, cognitiva, creativa, cultural, tecnológica y organizativa (tabla 1).

Como podemos observar, se trata de una herramienta de enorme potencial pedagógico, con un fuerte componente motivador, ya que combina el atractivo de la animación tradicional con la posibilidad de la fácil difusión de las producciones

a través de las redes sociales. No obstante, su valor pedagógico va más allá del entretenimiento: constituye una vía eficaz para abordar conceptos complejos, acercar la cultura popular al aula y reflexionar sobre problemáticas sociales y medioambientales. Desde una perspectiva interdisciplinar, se adapta bien a metodologías como el aprendizaje cooperativo o el enfoque STEAM, integrando ciencias, tecnología, ingeniería, arte y matemáticas en un mismo proceso. Si bien es cierto que no debemos obviar alguna de las dificultades que conlleva su implementación en el aula. Entre los retos más señalados están la necesidad de formación docente, la gestión y coordinación de equipos, así como el dominio de herramientas digitales específicas. Para el alumnado, las principales barreras suelen estar en la comprensión del lenguaje audiovisual, la elaboración de guiones gráficos o storyboards, y la edición de imágenes para lograr una secuencia fluida. Como destacan Gil Quintana y Marfil-Carmona (2018), la abundancia de aplicaciones disponibles para producir animaciones, lejos de simplificar el proceso, a menudo lo complica, ya que requiere tiempo para explorar y seleccionar la herramienta más adecuada. Pese a estas limitaciones, el stop motion sigue consolidándose como un recurso innovador de gran potencial en la enseñanza, capaz de transformar la relación del alumnado con los lenguajes visuales y con su propio aprendizaje.

Tabla 1. Cuadro comparativo: beneficios y limitaciones del stop motion en el aula.

Dimensión	Beneficios	Limitaciones
Pedagógica	Favorece la alfabetización audiovisual, mediática y digital; fomenta el trabajo cooperativo y la interdisciplinariedad; incrementa la motivación del alumnado.	Requiere formación específica del profesorado en alfabetización audiovisual; puede confundirse con una actividad meramente lúdica sin suficiente valor educativo. Riesgo de que se use como “moda” sin verdadero sentido curricular; puede derivar en producciones vacías desde el punto de vista educativo.
Cognitiva	Activa procesos de memoria y metacognición; potencia la resolución de problemas, la toma de decisiones y la comprensión de fenómenos complejos.	El alumnado puede tener dificultades para comprender el lenguaje audiovisual, elaborar guiones gráficos o trasladar ideas narrativas a imágenes en movimiento.
Creativa	Estimula la imaginación, la originalidad y el pensamiento crítico; convierte al alumnado en protagonista de su propio aprendizaje.	No todos los estudiantes se sienten cómodos con la expresión artística; la creatividad puede verse limitada por falta de referentes o inseguridad personal.
Cultural	Permite la aproximación a la cultura popular y al patrimonio; favorece la reinterpretación de tradiciones y la integración de lenguas y expresiones culturales.	Menos explorada en comparación con otras dimensiones; puede ser difícil integrarla en contextos con currículos rígidos o poco sensibles a la diversidad cultural.
Tecnológica	Es accesible gracias a dispositivos móviles y software gratuito; facilita la difusión en redes sociales y la creación de comunidades de aprendizaje transmedia	El uso de aplicaciones y dispositivos móviles genera retos técnicos; la edición foto a foto y la creación de secuencias fluidas demandan tiempo y competencias digitales. El uso de móviles puede interferir en los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje
Organizativa	Favorece la dinámica colaborativa en grupos, desarrollando competencias sociales y de organización.	La coordinación en trabajos grupales puede ser compleja; la diversidad de aplicaciones y la necesidad de tiempo para explorarlas dificultan la organización de proyectos. Riesgo de desigual participación de los miembros.

Fuente: elaboración propia

Como profesora de educación artística en distintos niveles educativos, he realizado diversas experiencias y proyectos utilizando el stop motion como recurso didáctico (Vidal & Ventura-Chalmeta, 2014; Ventura-Chalmeta, 2017, 2023). De entre los distintos beneficios de su uso, nos centraremos, a continuación, en aquellos que inciden en dos aspectos que considero clave en la docencia: la construcción crítica de la identidad en la adolescencia y la interdisciplinareidad y la interacción cooperativa en la formación de formadores en educación artística.

Cine, redes sociales y adolescencia: herramientas para la construcción crítica de la identidad

Sin duda, el cine constituye una herramienta fundamental en el ámbito educativo. A través tanto de la visualización como de la creación fílmica no solo es posible trabajar la alfabetización audiovisual y mediática, sino también utilizarlo como medio para debatir y visibilizar temáticas sociales de actualidad que afectan de manera directa o indirecta al alumnado. Una preocupación central en la práctica docente con los adolescentes a lo largo de estos años es la influencia del entorno en su percepción corporal y estética y cómo esta repercute en sus emociones, en la autopercepción y en la manera en que se relacionan con los demás. En este contexto, las redes sociales se configuran como un espacio donde se reflejan valores y comportamientos sociales que impactan de lleno en los procesos de construcción identitaria. La adolescencia es una etapa decisiva en la conformación de la identidad personal que determina además la correcta integración social (Vizcaíno-Verdú, Feijoo & Sádaba, 2025). Durante este periodo, los jóvenes son especialmente vulnerables a las influencias externas, tanto en el plano moral como en lo relativo a la representación del propio yo. Actualmente, con la expansión de las redes sociales y plataformas como TikTok, presentes de manera constante en la vida cotidiana de niños y jóvenes, no hablamos únicamente de espacios de ocio, sino de una nueva forma de cultura visual contemporánea. La exposición continua a contenidos audiovisuales en estas plataformas puede incidir de manera decisiva en la percepción del propio cuerpo y en la formación de su identidad. La comparación ya no se produce solo con famosos o influencers, sino también entre iguales (Vizcaíno-Verdú, Feijoo & Sádaba, 2025). De este modo, se refuerza y perpetua una visión estereotipada del cuerpo, y se promueven cánones estéticos ideales, casi siempre inalcanzables, configurados mediante filtros audiovisuales y recursos técnicos de edición que distorsionan la percepción de la realidad. El algoritmo de estas plataformas refuerza los estándares hegemónicos de belleza, genera uniformización visual y potencia la presión estética y la comparación social. Esta dinámica repercute negativamente en la salud mental de las y los adolescentes, ya que la exposición a estos contenidos estandarizados sobre la apariencia ideal puede afectar la percepción del propio cuerpo y, por tanto, a su estado de ánimo (Gurtala & Fardouly, 2022).

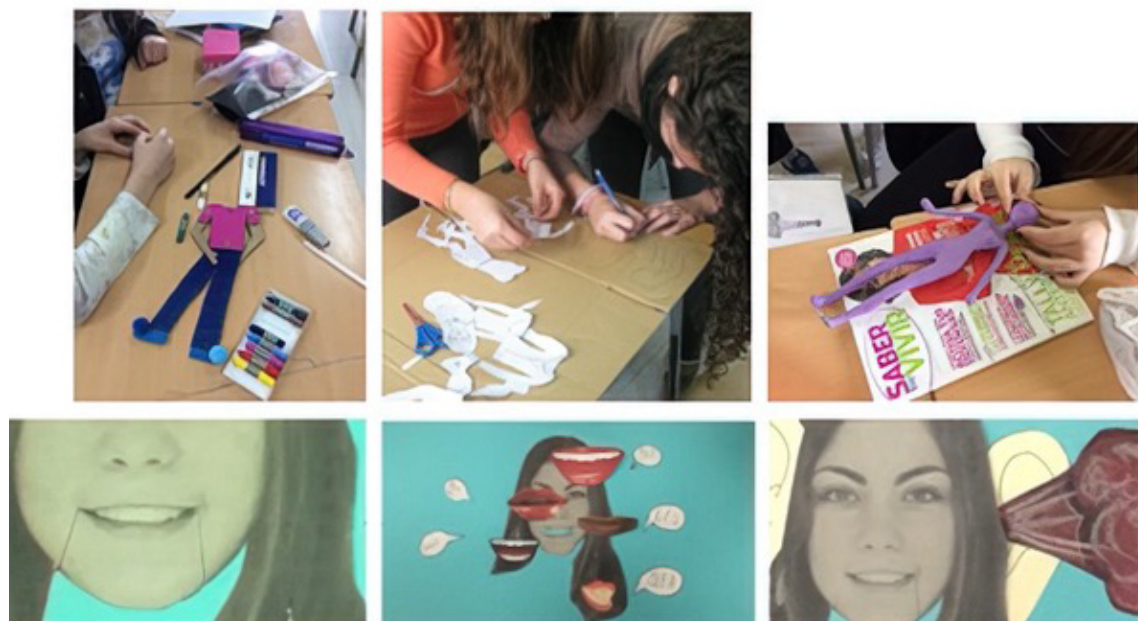


Figura 1. Autora (2025) Trabajo individual y colectivo: "Cómo eres". Serie fragmento compuesta por tres fotografías digitales de la autora y una serie secuencia extraída de la animación de una estudiante (2014)

Pero la influencia de las redes no se limita a la apariencia física. También proyectan valores relacionados con la sexualización y la performatividad del cuerpo, difundidos a través de influencers y tendencias estéticas vinculadas con estilos de vida lujosos, occidentales y hegemónicos. Se consolida así un ideal estético poco diverso, donde predominan cuerpos delgados, musculosos y activos, reforzando estereotipos visuales y corporales. Incluso los discursos aparentemente tiernos o de estética suave suelen enmarcarse en visiones conservadoras y regresivas. Difícilmente se encuentran estéticas disidentes o discursos críticos; tampoco abundan contenidos alternativos que escapen de la hegemonía visual dominante. Esta carencia limita la exploración identitaria de los adolescentes, que encuentran mayoritariamente modelos normativos sobre cómo deben ser (Signes, 2025).

Frente a esta realidad, el cine y la creación audiovisual ofrecen una vía pedagógica de gran potencial. A través de la realización de cortometrajes de ficción, se pueden abordar cuestiones como la manipulación mediática, artística y cultural y la influencia de las redes sociales en el colectivo juvenil. Ser conscientes de cómo se estructura un relato audiovisual y de los recursos de producción y postproducción utilizados permite comprender mejor la realidad y desarrollar un pensamiento crítico frente a las imágenes.

Además, el cine facilita la empatía, al permitir al espectador adentrarse en realidades opuestas a la propia y ponerse en el lugar del otro. La producción audiovisual cooperativa, al implicar diversas funciones y roles, se convierte en un espacio y medio idóneo para superar estereotipos y fomentar la igualdad de género (Escaño en Huerta, Alonso-Sanz & Ramón, 2019). Asimismo, la creación de relatos alejados de los estereotipos comerciales —por ejemplo, en torno a identidades LGTB— contribuye a la visibilización, concienciación y empoderamiento de las y los jóvenes con identidades de género diversas (Ventura-Chalmeta, 2021). En este sentido, el audiovisual se configura como un recurso clave para la coeducación, al generar narrativas e imaginarios más

plurales.

El hecho de que sea el propio alumnado quien genere conocimiento y construya su identidad ciudadana a través de producciones audiovisuales en stop motion resulta especialmente relevante. Esta práctica les brinda la posibilidad de trabajar desde un enfoque más empírico y con la combinación de múltiples lenguajes, lo que favorece la expresión e interpretación de conceptos, hechos y opiniones. De este modo, no se limitan al uso de la lengua oral y escrita —ya sea en su idioma materno o en lenguas extranjeras—, sino que incorporan además el lenguaje mediático como herramienta para abordar sus experiencias cotidianas y sociales, tanto en contextos formales como informales (Denicolai, 2017).

La creación audiovisual mediante stop motion abre, así, un abanico de oportunidades que se traduce en un espacio privilegiado para la exploración, la autoexpresión y la experimentación con la identidad. Su valor pedagógico es notable cuando se emplea de forma crítica, y la producción de materiales didácticos mediante esta técnica se convierte en un recurso con un gran potencial de empoderamiento, tanto para el profesorado como para el alumnado (Teresinha da Silva, 2016; Gil Quintana & Marfil-Carmona, 2018).

Stop motion en la formación de formadores: interdisciplinaredad e interacción cooperativa

A lo largo de los últimos años, como profesora en la Facultad de Magisterio hemos llevado a cabo una propuesta didáctica articulada en torno a la técnica de animación stop motion. Esta se concibe como un proyecto integral de alfabetización visual, audiovisual y digital en el marco de la educación artística del Grado de Maestro en Educación Primaria. Su eje vertebrador radica en la confluencia entre las potencialidades de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación (TIC) y las metodologías educativas emergentes del siglo XXI, tales como el aprendizaje cooperativo y la interdisciplinariedad. De este modo, el objetivo no es únicamente dotar de herramientas técnicas al alumnado, sino generar una metodología con vocación holística y transferible, susceptible de aplicarse también en etapas como la Educación Primaria y Secundaria, en el ámbito de la educación artística.

Ahora bien, este planteamiento no se reduce a una mera incorporación instrumental de las TIC en el aula. Lo que se persigue es que el alumnado, a través de la experiencia performativa que supone la creación de una obra audiovisual de animación, logre reflexionar sobre la importancia de la cultura visual en la sociedad actual. La práctica con stop motion abre la posibilidad de reconocer cómo las imágenes median en los entornos sociales, económicos y educativos, y de comprender su protagonismo en los procesos comunicativos junto a otros lenguajes ya consolidados en la esfera escolar (Denicolai, 2017). En este sentido, la alfabetización audiovisual se transforma en una vía de empoderamiento, que no solo amplía la capacidad expresiva del estudiantado, sino que también favorece la toma de conciencia crítica respecto a su propio entorno.

Este horizonte exige, inevitablemente, repensar el rol docente. La figura del profesorado ya no puede entenderse como mero transmisor de conocimientos, sino como guía y acompañante que orienta procesos de aprendizaje autónomos y reflexivos (Teresinha da Silva, 2016). Tal transformación se vincula estrechamente

con el desarrollo de las TIC, que han modificado nuestra relación con el conocimiento, caracterizado ahora por su abundancia, inmediatez y caducidad. De ahí que resulte pertinente buscar estrategias didácticas que promuevan la capacidad de seleccionar, interpretar y reelaborar la información, y es justamente en esta tarea donde el stop motion adquiere un valor singular: su carácter híbrido lo convierte en un terreno fértil para la articulación de enfoques interdisciplinares, capaces de tender puentes entre áreas tan diversas como las lenguas, las ciencias sociales o la tecnología.

De hecho, la interdisciplinariedad no aparece aquí como un mero añadido, sino como condición inherente al propio proceso creativo de la animación. Tal como señala Ferri (2016), la animación es, por definición, un espacio donde confluyen múltiples destrezas y saberes, y cuyo dominio exige un aprendizaje constante y diverso. Esta misma idea ha guiado el proyecto que venimos desarrollando en la universidad donde las colaboraciones con áreas como la Didáctica de las Ciencias Sociales o la Didáctica de la Lengua y la Literatura Inglesa han demostrado que la integración de miradas disciplinares enriquece tanto la práctica como la reflexión pedagógica. La favorable recepción de estas experiencias por parte del alumnado nos confirma, curso tras curso, que el stop motion funciona como catalizador de aprendizajes complejos y transversales (Gil Quintana & Marfil-Carmona, 2018).

A este componente interdisciplinar se suma otro igualmente determinante: la dimensión cooperativa. La creación de una película en stop motion requiere de un engranaje colectivo donde el reparto de roles, la coordinación constante y la comunicación fluida resultan imprescindibles. A diferencia de la animación digital en 3D —que suele fragmentar procesos y externalizar tareas—, el stop motion reclama la convivencia del equipo en un mismo espacio, compartiendo decorados, marionetas y materiales. Tal como destaca Purves (2011), esta dinámica fomenta la crítica constructiva, el apoyo mutuo y un espíritu de camaradería difícil de replicar en otras técnicas, lo que convierte la interacción social en parte indisociable del proceso creativo.

No es casual, entonces, que los beneficios educativos de este trabajo cooperativo sean tan evidentes. Suárez (2007) recuerda que el aprendizaje no puede entenderse al margen de las relaciones sociales, y que la interacción recíproca potencia tanto el rendimiento académico como la integración social y el desarrollo personal. En nuestros propios proyectos, esta lógica se traduce en pautas claras de organización grupal: aunque el objetivo sea colectivo, cada integrante debe asumir responsabilidades específicas, garantizando así que todos los estudiantes asimilen al menos los contenidos esenciales. Como bien apunta este autor 'el objetivo primordial de la interacción cooperativa no radica simplemente en que los alumnos realicen algo juntos, sino en que juntos logren aprender' (p. 66).

Esta exigencia organizativa nos enfrenta a uno de los retos más complejos: la gestión de los equipos. La experiencia práctica demuestra que no basta con trabajar en grupo; es necesario que el alumnado experimente las tensiones, contradicciones y aprendizajes implícitos en la cooperación real, y que reflexione sobre ello de manera crítica. Tal ejercicio de práctica reflexiva (Schön, 1992) resulta esencial para su futura labor docente, pues les permite anticipar y gestionar dinámicas similares en el aula con mayor madurez pedagógica. En este

sentido, la vivencia del stop motion no solo enseña a cooperar, sino que educa en la cooperación, alentar la tolerancia cultural, el respeto mutuo y la aceptación del otro (Suárez, 2007)

En definitiva, la propuesta basada en la técnica stop motion entrelaza alfabetización audiovisual, interdisciplinariedad y aprendizaje cooperativo en una experiencia pedagógica de gran riqueza formativa. Su fuerza radica precisamente en la capacidad de integrar competencias técnicas, sociales y culturales en un mismo proceso, contribuyendo así al desarrollo integral del alumnado y situando la educación artística como motor de transformación educativa y social.

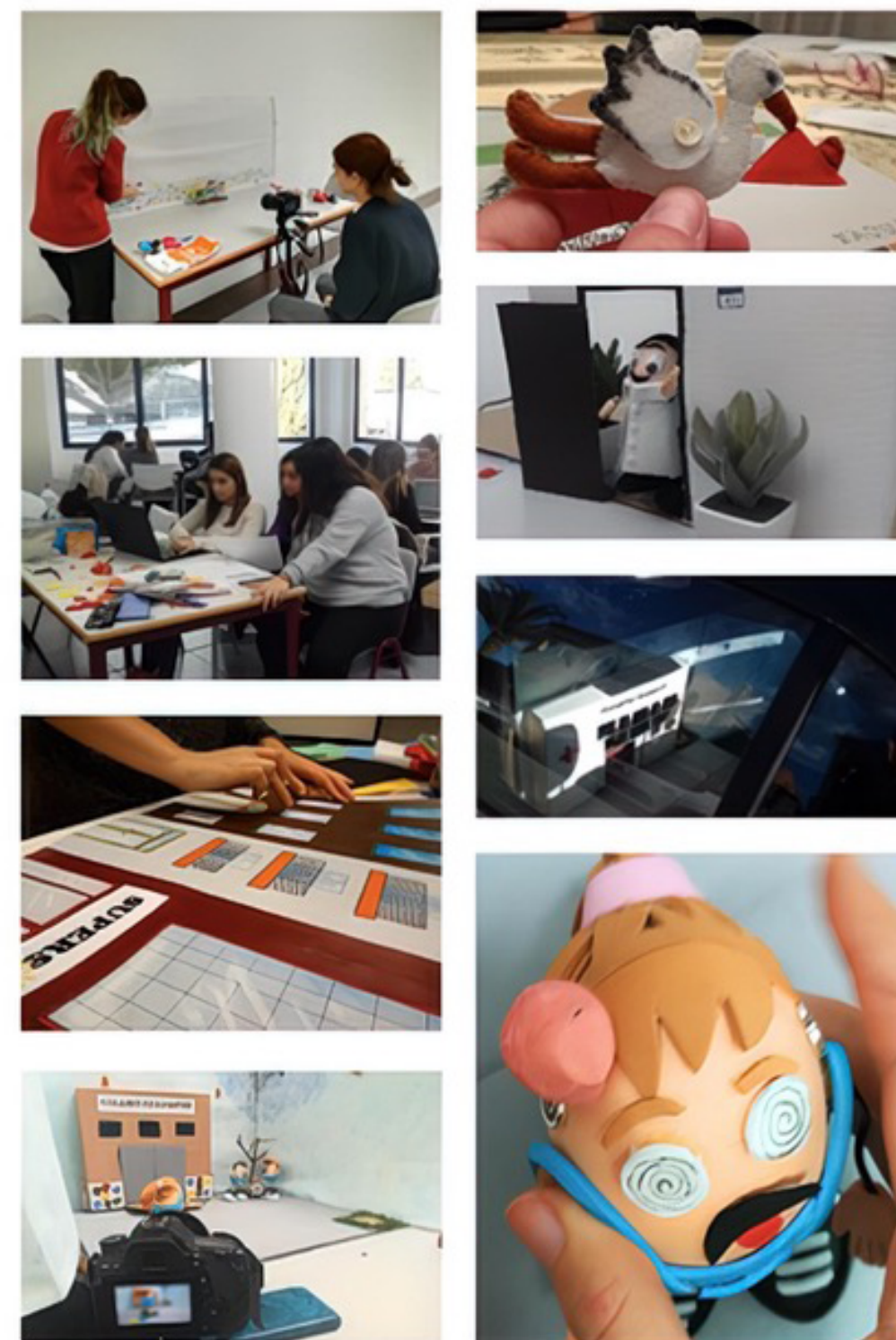


Figura 2. Trabajo cooperativo. Cómo se hizo. Serie secuencia formada por ocho fotografías digitales a color de las estudiantes del grupo 6.5 "Mi Familia" (2019). Composición de la autora (en Ventura-Chalmeta, 2023)

Conclusiones

La centralidad de la imagen en la sociedad contemporánea exige una transformación profunda en la manera en que la escuela aborda los lenguajes visuales y digitales. Lejos de ser un complemento, la alfabetización mediática y audiovisual se presenta como una competencia esencial en la formación de una ciudadanía crítica, creativa y socialmente comprometida.

En este contexto, la creación audiovisual en el aula, y de manera particular la técnica del stop motion, se configura como una estrategia pedagógica capaz de articular creatividad, pensamiento crítico y competencias digitales en un mismo proceso. Al tiempo que motiva y conecta con la cultura participativa de las nuevas generaciones, ofrece un espacio para la construcción de conocimiento, la autoexpresión y la exploración identitaria.

Aunque su implementación plantea desafíos tanto para docentes como para estudiantes, estos no deben concebirse como obstáculos insalvables, sino como oportunidades para repensar la práctica educativa y enriquecerla. El stop motion, más allá de su valor técnico o artístico, abre la posibilidad de transformar la educación en un espacio más inclusivo, participativo y alineado con los retos de la sociedad contemporánea, reafirmando así su relevancia como recurso pedagógico de gran potencial.

La investigación y la práctica docente aquí descritas evidencian que la animación stop motion la investigación y la práctica docente aquí descritas evidencian que la animación stop motion es un modelo transferible y adaptable a diversos niveles y áreas educativas. Su implementación favorece el desarrollo de competencias críticas, digitales y comunicativas; promueve el trabajo interdisciplinar y cooperativo; y se ajusta a distintos contextos, objetivos y temáticas. Asimismo, permite abordar identidades y problemáticas sociales, integrando la educación mediática como eje transversal en los currículos oficiales. En definitiva, el stop motion no es solo una técnica artística, sino un instrumento para la construcción de conocimiento, la reflexión crítica y la transformación educativa.

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Arte, ecofeminismo y sostenibilidad: Resiliencias creativas en prácticas pedagógicas transformadoras

Art, ecofeminism and sustainability: Creative resilience in transformative pedagogical practices

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Resumen

Este artículo analiza el ecofeminismo como un movimiento teórico y práctico que relaciona y vincula la opresión que han sufrido históricamente las mujeres con la explotación de la naturaleza, todo ello debido a los sistemas capitalistas, patriarcales y antropocéntricos. Desde su origen en los años 70, el ecofeminismo ha evolucionado en dos corrientes principales: la esencialista, que vincula a las mujeres con la naturaleza de forma innata, y la crítica, que realiza las diferencias de género como construcciones sociales e históricas. Dicho enfoque cuestiona los dualismos jerárquicos y tiene en cuenta la ética de cuidado a través de la cooperación, empatía y sostenibilidad.

De igual manera, se destaca la crítica de Donna Haraway sobre la supuesta neutralidad de la ciencia y la propuesta de “conocimientos situados” que reconocen la gran variedad de experiencias para enfrentar la crisis ecológica. Se presenta el arte ecofeminista como una herramienta pedagógica, crítica y transformadora que visibiliza la conexión del cuerpo con la naturaleza,

destacando las obras de artistas tales como Cecilia Vicuña, Ana Mendieta, Regina José Galindo o Lucía Loren; todas ellas hacen una resistencia simbólica frente a las estructuras de dominación.

Esta investigación lleva a cabo una metodología de estudio documental de casos que nos permite analizar las prácticas artísticas y performativas que combinan el cuerpo y la naturaleza como espacios clave de lucha y transformación cultural. Se puede comprobar que el arte ecofeminista es una gran herramienta pedagógica y de sensibilización que promueve equidad, sostenibilidad y vínculos entre las personas y la naturaleza sin jerarquías.

Palabras Clave: ecofeminismo, mujeres, naturaleza, ciencia.

Abstract

This article analyzes ecofeminism as a theoretical and practical movement that connects the oppression women have historically suffered with the exploitation of nature, all due to capitalist, patriarchal, and anthropocentric systems. Since its origins in the 1970s, ecofeminism has evolved into two main currents: essentialist, which innately connects women to nature, and critical, which recognizes gender differences as social and historical constructs. This approach questions hierarchical dualisms and considers the ethic of care through cooperation, empathy, and sustainability.

It also highlights Donna Haraway's critique of the supposed neutrality of science and her proposal for “situated knowledge,” which recognizes the wide variety of experiences in addressing the ecological crisis. Ecofeminist art is presented as a pedagogical, critical, and transformative tool that makes visible the connection between the body and nature, highlighting the works of artists such as Cecilia Vicuña, Ana Mendieta, Regina José Galindo, and Lucía Loren; all of whom represent symbolic resistance to structures of domination.

This research uses a documentary case study methodology that allows us to analyze artistic and performative practices that combine the body and nature as key spaces of struggle and cultural transformation. It is evident that ecofeminist art is a powerful pedagogical and awareness-raising tool that promotes equity, sustainability, and connections between people and nature without hierarchies.

Keywords: ecofeminism, women, nature, science.

Introducción

El ecofeminismo surgió en la década de 1970, siendo un movimiento que combina la crítica feminista con la ecología para cuestionar los sistemas patriarcales, capitalistas y antropocéntricos que han validado la opresión de las mujeres y la explotación de la naturaleza (Gutiérrez-Jordano, 2021). Desde sus inicios, este movimiento ha ido evolucionando hacia gran diversidad de perspectivas, sin embargo, todas coinciden en la necesidad de replantear las relaciones entre humanidad, naturaleza y género desde la ética del cuidado y desde la sostenibilidad.

El desarrollo teórico del ecofeminismo se centra principalmente en dos enfoques: el esencialista y el crítico; este último modelo, sobre todo desarrollado por Alicia Puleo, es el que se sigue ampliamente en la actualidad ya que propone la

incorporación de diferentes valores y también promueve una transformación profunda de los dualismos jerárquicos, como hombre/mujer, que han reforzado las desigualdades sociales.

Es Donna Haraway la que amplía aún más esta crítica cuestionando la supuesta neutralidad de la ciencia y dando más importancia a la diversidad de perspectivas, incluyendo comunidades rurales e indígenas, para solucionar la presente crisis ecológica.

Por otro lado, se destaca la importancia del arte como una gran herramienta pedagógica y transformadora que sea capaz de cuestionar los discursos dominantes y proponer nuevas formas de entender la conexión y relación entre la humanidad y el espacio natural. Desde el ecofeminismo, el arte no solo tiene una función estética, sino que se convierte en un espacio crítico donde reflexionar y realizar acción social en la que se visibilicen las conexiones entre los cuerpos de las mujeres, la cultura y la naturaleza. Como menciona Burriel (2024), el uso de manifestaciones artísticas permite la creación de narrativas que van más allá del lenguaje académico tradicional, incidiendo en el aspecto emocional.

Las propuestas artísticas ecofeministas rompen con las fronteras entre la naturaleza y la cultura, abriendo espacios de resistencia simbólica en el que las identidades y los paisajes se fusionan, generando experiencias estéticas que cuestionan la sociedad capitalista.

Es a través del uso de materiales ecofeministas para la realización de propuestas artística cuando nos podemos ir acercando a una conciencia climática desde la perspectiva de género. No obstante, la realización de ello, implica acciones más profundas tales como el fomento de la creatividad, transformar los problemas en posibilidades de crecimiento e innovación o la reconstrucción a través de la resolución de dichos problemas.

De esta forma, este estudio se propone analizar el gran potencial del arte ecofeminista como un medio que nos lleva hacia la sensibilización y el cambio cultural. Todo ello a través de una metodología de estudio documental de casos que nos permitirá la identificación de las principales prácticas artísticas y los discursos que combinan el cuerpo y la naturaleza como espacios de resistencia y reconstrucción social.

Fundamento

El ecofeminismo se puede concebir como un movimiento, tanto teórico como práctico, que relaciona y vincula la opresión que han sufrido y sufren las mujeres en la sociedad con la explotación del medio natural, donde entra la vegetación y los animales, todo ello por los sistemas capitalistas, patriarcales y antropocéntricos (Gutiérrez-Jordano, 2021). Surgió sobre los años 70 en Francia, destacando a Françoise D'Eaubonne y tomando mayor auge en Estados Unidos (Tapia, 2023).

La autora Alicia Puleo según Tapia (2023), entiende el ecofeminismo como la convergencia entre el feminismo y la ecología. De esta forma, se cuestiona la visión antropocéntrica y patriarcal de la relación existente entre la humanidad y la naturaleza.

Dicho enfoque propone el rechazo hacia el dualismo jerárquico presente en la sociedad por el que se han sustentado los sistemas de dominación. Algunos de dichos dualismos son hombre/mujer, humano/animal, cultura/ naturaleza,

entre otros (Gutiérrez-Jordano, 2021), que han servido para legitimar formas de dominación patriarcal, racista y especista.

Según Alicia Puleo, hay dos corrientes ecofeministas principales:

- Clásico o esencialista: Esta corriente asocia el papel de la mujer con la naturaleza y el cuidado de forma natural.

- Constructivista o crítico: Rechaza el esencialismo y defiende que las diferencias de género son meras construcciones históricas y sociales.

De esta forma, vemos que el ecofeminismo crítico se distancia de la corriente esencialista, que asocia a las mujeres con la naturaleza de forma innata, y del feminismo, el que suele ignorar la dimensión ecológica (Tapia, 2023). Por lo tanto, el ecofeminismo crítico se basan en tres ejes principales:

1. Legado ilustrado: se retoman valores de la Ilustración tales como la autonomía moral o la racionalidad crítica para fundamentar una ética ecofeminista que no asocie de forma natural a las mujeres con los roles tradicionales de cuidado. La autonomía es lo que permite a las mujeres decidir sobre sus proyectos vitales sin quedar atrapadas en la maternidad y en la protección de la naturaleza.

2. Sensibilidad ecológica: se replantea el significado de la vida buena, que actualmente está asociada al consumo ilimitado. Se replantea de tal forma que se entiende por vida buena una vida sostenible que tenga respeto hacia la naturaleza y que promueva valores como la cooperación, la empatía y el cuidado como virtudes humanas universales.

3. Mujeres indígenas: se reconocen las acciones de las mujeres indígenas, promoviendo un diálogo que reconoce la gran diversidad cultural desde el respeto, sin caer en apropiaciones, ofreciendo así grandes alternativas al modelo occidental actual.

Donna Haraway también intenta romper con la idea de que las mujeres tienen una conexión natural e innata con el medio natural, proponiendo de la misma forma la construcción social e histórica de las categorías de género en contraposición de la idea de una conexión como una realidad biológica fija (Gómez, 2012).

Además, realiza una crítica al concepto que la sociedad tiene de la naturaleza, defendiendo que la naturaleza es el resultado de las diferentes prácticas culturales, históricas y científicas que la han ido definiendo durante la historia y la evolución social. Dicha idea de naturaleza, siempre ha sido utilizada para justificar y reforzar las estructuras de poder y valores morales, tales como son la heteronormatividad y los roles y estereotipos de género tradicionales. Por otro lado, también realiza una crítica a la ciencia moderna, cuestionando la supuesta neutralidad y universalidad que se atribuye a la ciencia. Se realiza esa crítica porque es la ciencia moderna la que naturaliza las conductas humanas y legítima jerarquías de razas, clase y especie (Gómez, 2012). Como podemos ver, se recupera la idea de la falacia naturalista, que indica que lo que la sociedad considera como "natural" no puede justificar los valores y los roles sociales que se imponen (Ayala, s.f.).

En este contexto, destacamos el concepto de "conocimientos situados" que es una crítica al ideal actual de la ciencia como un conocimiento objetivo, neutral y universal. Donna Haraway, critica que la supuesta neutralidad de la ciencia ha jerarquizado el género, la raza y las especies, provocando las grandes desigualdades sociales y tratándolas como algo natural; además, se ha desvinculado a la ciencia de valores, desconectándola por completo de la sociedad (Gómez, 2012). Son estos "conocimientos situados" los que nos

permiten tratar la crisis ecológica desde varias perspectivas, llevando a cabo el reconocimiento de las experiencias personales de mujeres, de comunidades rurales y de pueblos originarios para entender realmente las diferentes dinámicas de explotación de la naturaleza y proponer diferentes alternativas sostenibles. Como hemos podido comprobar, el ecofeminismo es un movimiento que se centra en la lucha contra la opresión de las mujeres y del medio natural, intentando erradicar la cosificación de “lo otro”. Para ello, Gutiérrez-Jordano (2021), propone una ética del cuidado que se basa en la creación de vínculos con otras especies a través de la responsabilidad mutua y el respeto. Además, este movimiento propone el abandono del tradicional dominio, acumulación y explotación para llegar a crear una relación cooperativa y no jerarquizada con la naturaleza, responsabilizando también a los hombres de la ética del cuidado ecológico (Ayala, s.f.).

El arte es una magnífica herramienta de sensibilización y cambio cultural con la que se pueden crear diferentes formas de convivencia con los animales y con el medio natural en general, con el que se pueden romper las narrativas tradicionalmente dominantes y así visibilizar la interdependencia de las distintas formas de vida y los cuerpos femeninos. Las propuestas artísticas que trabajan desde el ecofeminismo promueven la empatía hacia la naturaleza y los animales, incorporando un gran potencial pedagógico y transformador a las propuestas (Gutiérrez-Jordano, 2021).

Dentro del arte como herramienta para el ecofeminismo, encontramos diferentes espacios de resistencia; uno de ellos es el cuerpo, que podemos entenderlo como un gran espacio simbólico y político con el que se puede comunicar las diferentes conexiones entre el género, la naturaleza y el poder, a través del cual se domina todo. Del mismo modo, otro espacio de resistencia es la performance, donde podemos encontrar la realización de diferentes rituales y narrativas que cuestionan y critican a los discursos de dominación, siendo así la performance una gran herramienta de visibilización y transformación (Burriel, 2024)

Siguiendo a Marta Burriel León (2024), entre las prácticas artísticas ecofeministas que nos permiten conectar la experiencia corporal con la defensa de la biodiversidad nos podemos encontrar:

- Uso de textiles. Muchas mujeres han tejido a lo largo de los siglos, lo que ha servido para adherir el ámbito textil a la idea de feminidad en el mundo patriarcal. No obstante, las mujeres han utilizado estas prácticas textiles para sublevarse y reivindicar sus derechos, como por ejemplo hicieron las sufragistas inglesas del siglo XX con las pancartas que tejían a mano para las manifestaciones (Andorrà, 2022). La capacidad de comunicación dentro de la narración textil también se refleja en el artículo titulado “Tejer y narrar en la plástica española contemporánea”, donde María Teresa Alario Trigueros realiza la forma de una araña para reivindicar el uso de textiles como una práctica artística, pero también para generar otra forma de narrar ecofeminista, vinculando las relaciones que hay entre la mujer y la naturaleza.

Además, el uso de textiles adquiere un gran valor pedagógico al transmitir conocimientos generacionales a través de técnicas manuales que preservan la memoria colectiva femenina y que actualmente utilizamos de forma crítica visibilizando las labores tradicionalmente feminizadas frente a los cánones patriarcales. Desde un plano simbólico, los hilos y materiales textiles son como

las conexiones existentes entre los cuerpos, el territorio y las historias de las personas que residen allí.

- Quipus. El quipu es un sistema trabajado por muchas civilizaciones tales como la inca que trata de un conjunto de cuerdas con nudos y colores que utiliza un sistema determinado para registrar y almacenar información que posteriormente se puede contar. Podemos ver como ejemplos las obras de Cecilia Vicuña tituladas Quipu Mapocho y Quipu Womb, con las que expresa de forma clara el rol de las mujeres de forma histórica, teniendo la mujer el “arte de contar” (Bachraty, 2019).

Su gran valor pedagógico reside en la transmisión de saberes comunitarios con un lenguaje material alternativo, donde los nudos y las cuerdas representan los vínculos entre la memoria, el territorio y el cuerpo. Por lo general, se utiliza para realizar una crítica hacia la perspectiva decolonial.

- Huellas corporales. Esta práctica artística trata de realizar marcas y trazos con su propio cuerpo en el medio natural o con elementos naturales. Además, también se utiliza su propio cuerpo como lienzo, teniendo en cuenta que todas las obras son temporales al centrarse en la importancia del propio acto y que el espacio es muy alternativo. Se suele relacionar con el BodyArt (Fernández, 2015).

Adquiere valor pedagógico al situar el cuerpo como una herramienta de conocimiento a través del aprendizaje sensorial y experiencial, cuestionando los estándares patriarcales que objetualizan los cuerpos de las mujeres y transformándolos en sujetos activos y políticos que participan en la naturaleza de forma autónoma.

No obstante, el uso de estos materiales naturales, reciclados o efímeros dentro del arte ecofeminista no debe entenderse como una mera práctica sostenible y alternativa a lo tradicional. Como hemos comprobado, cada una de ellas se convierten en una gran herramienta pedagógica que potencia la creatividad, la resiliencia y la capacidad de transformar los problemas en nuevas posibilidades de crecimiento. A través de ellas podemos llegar hasta una reflexión profunda sobre los procesos de creación artística, la relación que tenemos con nuestro entorno y la necesidad de repensar y reconstruir los modelos artísticos.

Entre las artistas que han llevado a cabo obras que entretengan entre el cuerpo, la naturaleza y la memoria cultural destacamos los trabajos de:

Cecilia Vicuña con su trabajo activista artístico contemporáneo titulado Semi ya nos muestra la maternidad híbrida y vocación ecológica; se centra en mostrar y visibilizar en la sociedad las subjetividades que han sido excluidas y silenciadas históricamente. Este proyecto, además, tiene el ideal de formar una comunidad que trabaje de forma colaborativa para llegar al autosustento, criticando los límites campo/ciudad y la idea de propiedad privada (Barros, 2019). En general, Semi ya, es un poema que tiene como manifiesto un llamado a la acción para conseguir la conservación de la ecología y no dejar en el olvido los saberes indígenas, volviendo a recopilarlos. Además, plantaba semillas y, cuando el árbol había crecido lo regalaba a otra persona, formando esa idea de comunidad y colaboración.

Ana Mendieta en sus obras, especialmente en la serie Siluetas (1973-1980), trabaja la conexión entre el cuerpo y la naturaleza a través de intervenciones efímeras en entornos naturales dejando la huella de su cuerpo. Desde el ecofeminismo,

esta obra denuncia de forma simbólica la violencia que han sufrido los cuerpos femeninos y el entorno natural por parte del patriarcado y ven en las obras de Mendieta una forma de unirse por completo con la tierra, dejando atrás esa separación o dualidad entre lo humano y lo no humano (Berbel, 2023).

Regina José Galindo denuncia con sus performances la sumisión de las mujeres y la explotación de la tierra utilizando su cuerpo como material central de trabajo. Como, por ejemplo, la performance titulada Tierra intenta explicar el genocidio y ecocidio sucedido en los años 36 durante la Guerra Civil en Guatemala, donde los soldados arrasaron con las tierras de los indígenas para que no pudiesen sobrevivir. La acción performática consistía en Galindo inmóvil y desnuda a la vez que una excavadora lleva a cabo un profundo foso a su alrededor para mostrar la crueldad que sufrió el pueblo (Soto, 2019).

Lucía Loren lleva a cabo intervenciones en el medio natural que están vinculadas con un discurso ecofeminista político con influencia del esencialismo. Una de sus obras más reconocidas es Madre Sal, en la que Loren entierra en el campo esculturas de roca de sal con forma de pechos de mujer para que los animales se pudiesen nutrir de los minerales de la sal para después devolverlos a la naturaleza de forma orgánica. De esta forma, se defiende el cuidado y la interacción amable con el entorno y los animales (Campos, 2020).



Figura 1. Lucía Loren, Madre sal, 2008. lucialoren.com

También destacamos la importancia de otros artistas contemporáneos que se han centrado en desarrollar prácticas sostenibles y efímeras que relacionan y vinculan el arte y la naturaleza como vemos a continuación.

Francis Alÿs trabaja entre las intersecciones del arte y lo social para encontrar la poética de los espacios y lo urbano; utiliza el medio eco-estético en sus obras artísticas porque busca y le interesa la idea que hay detrás del proceso por encima de los medios y del estilo de la obra. No obstante, nunca menciona la relación de la ecología o eco-estética con sus piezas, aunque vemos la clara relación (Reyna, 2018). En relación a todo esto, destacamos su acción "Cuando la fe mueve montañas" donde se apropia de un lugar a través de la acción realizada y su registro documental.

Cuando aparece la sensibilidad medioambiental en los años sesenta y setenta, no podemos evitar hablar del land art, destacando principalmente a Nancy Holt, Richard Long y Andy Goldsworthy. Esta sensibilidad se puede considerar como los primeros pasos del ecofeminismo, con el que nos enseña a ver el arte a través de la implicación del cuerpo y sus sentidos, en concreto centrándose en la

recuperación del cuerpo de la mujer a través de materiales y entornos naturales (Gutiérrez-Jordano, 2025). Destacamos la performance "Chicken movie, chicken piece 1972", donde se drena la sangre de un pollo decapitado que cae sobre el cuerpo desnudo de Mendieta para reivindicar los procesos que se realizan en los mataderos (Gutiérrez-Jordano, 2025).

Por lo tanto, como hemos podido comprobar, el ecofeminismo conlleva una serie de implicaciones éticas y políticas al buscar un cambio profundo en la relación con el mundo natural y los animales que exige repensar todas las prácticas, tanto culturales, artísticas y productivas, desde la inclusión, la sostenibilidad y la crítica del especismo (Gutiérrez-Jordano, 2021).

Dentro de los métodos de las prácticas artísticas performativas ecofeministas que buscan romper con los dualismos culturales destacamos la sobreexposición del cuerpo, donde se visibiliza la vulnerabilidad y resistencia, donde podemos destacar a las obras de las artistas Mendieta y Galindo, y la ocultación o mimetización con la que se puede explorar la fusión simbólica con la naturaleza, como podemos ver en las obras de las artistas de Paola Correa y Teresa Murak. Como conclusión, el ecofeminismo se establece como una crítica y propósito de repensar las relaciones humanas y no humanas sin tener en cuenta la separación de sexos, todo ello desde la equidad y la sostenibilidad (Tapia, 2023). El sistema capitalista explota a gran escala la naturaleza y los cuerpos femeninos, junto con otros colectivos vulnerables, sin embargo, las mujeres son las más afectadas por este sistema al afectarles de mayor manera la degradación ambiental, generando desigualdades para acceder a recursos y derechos sobre la tierra. De esta forma, se destaca la utilización de valores históricamente feminizados, tales como la empatía, el cuidado o la cooperación, para conseguir esos modelos sociales sostenibles y equitativos (Ayala, s.f.).

Por último, el ecofeminismo, a veces, parece simplemente algo ambiental cuando realmente el arte ecofeminista integra ética del cuidado, creatividad y reconstrucción cultural, permitiéndonos abrir espacios interdisciplinarios entre diferentes áreas de conocimiento como son la filosofía, la ética, los estudios de género, el arte y la biología, promoviendo nuevas metodologías de trabajo que integran la teoría crítica con la praxis creativa, generando y produciendo un conocimiento que transforme y emancipe a la sociedad en general (Gutiérrez-Jordano, 2021).

Metodología

El presente artículo se realiza bajo el paradigma socio-crítico, ya que intenta abordar la conexión existente entre la opresión que sufren las mujeres y la explotación del medio natural por parte del sistema patriarcal y capitalista que, históricamente han infravalorado tanto el papel de la mujer como la naturaleza. A través de todo ello, se tiene el objetivo de transformar la visión de la mujer y de la naturaleza y su supuesta conexión innata a través de la realización de diversas actividades artísticas que impliquen el uso del cuerpo y de la naturaleza.

La metodología que se ha utilizado para realizar la fundamentación y conclusión del presente artículo ha sido el estudio documental de casos que, siguiendo a Yin (1994), el estudio de casos es una investigación empírica que estudia un fenómeno concreto en el contexto de la vida real, sobre todo, cuando los límites entre el fenómeno y el contexto no son totalmente evidentes. Además, muestra que uno de los principales prejuicios sobre el estudio de casos es que

no representan a una muestra concreta de población, no pudiendo generalizar estadísticamente.

Se ha llevado a cabo la recopilación de información de varios estudios que han investigado, de forma cualitativa, el ecofeminismo y las prácticas artísticas que nos permiten conectar la experiencia corporal con la defensa de la biodiversidad. La presente metodología nos permite comparar los diferentes estudios, teniendo en cuenta los resultados y conclusiones para conocer de forma más profunda los beneficios de las prácticas ecofeministas.

Trabajar con el estudio de casos nos facilita entrar en contacto con diversas situaciones de la vida real, obteniendo de esta manera, una gran riqueza de detalles especialmente importantes para la presente investigación. Porque vivir la situación y llegar a comprender el por qué se desarrollan los fenómenos es la mejor forma de recolección de campo y llegar a la interpretación más semejante a la realidad. Da respuesta a cómo y por qué ocurren los sucesos, centrándose en los fenómenos de estudio desde diversas perspectivas para hacer una exploración más profunda (Chaves y Weiler, 2016).

Conclusiones

La presente investigación nos permite reconocer al ecofeminismo como un marco crítico muy necesario en la actualidad para cuestionar las estructuras jerárquicas que han validado y reforzado las diferentes opresiones y desigualdades de las mujeres y de la explotación del medio natural. Se presentan como valores centrales del ecofeminismo la ética del cuidado, la cooperación y la sostenibilidad, valores con los que se pueden generar diferentes alternativas que sustituyan a los modelos de desarrollo capitalistas, patriarcales y antropocéntricos que han dominado históricamente “lo otro”, “la otredad”, entre los que nos encontramos cuerpos de mujeres, animales o territorios, colectivos disidentes. La revisión de diferentes propuestas teóricas y prácticas artísticas nos evidencian que el arte ecofeminista es muy importante dentro del movimiento porque tiene un papel pedagógico, estético y transformador. Dichas prácticas artísticas nos permiten visibilizar la interdependencia que existe entre los cuerpos, la naturaleza y la cultura, creando narrativas críticas que rompen con los discursos dominantes y hegemónicos. Algunos ejemplos, como hemos podido observar a lo largo del escrito, pueden ser performances, huellas corporales, el uso de textiles, etc.; actividades que nos muestran cómo puede funcionar el cuerpo como un espacio de resistencia simbólica y política, favoreciendo la sensibilidad hacia la ecología y conectándonos con las culturas indígenas y saberes situados.

Del mismo modo, el ecofeminismo no se limita únicamente a un enfoque teórico, promueve metodologías interdisciplinarias entre las que se encuentran la filosofía, la ética, la biología, estudios de género y el arte, pudiendo generar así diferentes combinaciones de análisis crítico y práctica creativa. Es ese carácter híbrido el que le aporta el potencial transformador significativo que es capaz de incidir en diversos ámbitos, entre los que se encuentra el ámbito educativo, cultural y social, construyendo comunidades más justas y ecológicamente responsables.

Para concluir, vemos cómo el ecofeminismo nos invita a repensar las formas de habitar el mundo desde gran diversidad de valores como el respeto y la sostenibilidad, como hemos mencionado anteriormente, abriendo un nuevo mundo en el que haya un cambio cultural profundo que reconozca la interdependencia de todas las formas de vida.

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A democratização do acesso ao ensino artístico especializado público- contributos legislativos para uma educação promotora de paz e interculturalidade

Democratization in the access to vocational artistic training in public education- policies for an education promoting peace and interculturality

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Resumo

Este estudo analisa criticamente a evolução normativa do Ensino Artístico Especializado (EAE) em Portugal (1935–2023). A partir de 48 diplomas do Diário da República, construímos uma cronologia analítico-tipológica e codificámos seis eixos de impacto (acesso, currículo, avaliação, docência, financiamento, regionalização). Identificam-se avanços na harmonização curricular, profissionalização docente e contratualização, mas persistem tensões: integração plena no sistema regular, coerência avaliativa e assimetrias territoriais. Ancorando-nos em Freire (1970), Dewey (1916), Young e Muller (2007) e Eisner (2002), discutimos o EAE como espaço de cidadania, paz e interculturalidade. Concluímos com seis recomendações operacionais e um conjunto de indicadores verificáveis (p. ex., reconhecimento formal da avaliação formativa, redes interinstitucionais, linhas orçamentais dedicadas), visando qualidade, equidade e sustentabilidade do EAE. O contributo original reside na articulação entre teoria curricular crítica, normativos recentes e métricas de monitorização replicáveis.

Palavras-chave: Ensino Artístico Especializado; Legislação; Currículo;

Abstract

This article offers a critical account of the legal evolution of Specialised Arts Education (EAE) in Portugal (1935–2023). Drawing on 48 Governmental documents, we build an analytical chronology and code six impact axes (access, curriculum, assessment, teaching workforce, funding, regionalisation). We find progress in curricular harmonisation, teacher professionalisation and contractual governance, alongside enduring gaps: full integration within mainstream education, coherent assessment models, and territorial disparities. Framed by Freire (1970), Dewey (1916), Young e Muller (2007), and Eisner (2002), we read EAE as a site for citizenship, peace, and interculturality. We propose six actionable recommendations plus verifiable indicators (e.g., formal recognition of formative/ performance assessment; inter-institutional networks; dedicated budget lines) to strengthen quality, equity and sustainability. The paper's original contribution lies in bridging critical curriculum theory, recent Portuguese regulation, and a replicable monitoring metric set.

Keywords: Specialised Arts Education; Policy; curriculum;

Introdução

A história do Ensino Artístico Especializado (EAE) em Portugal confunde-se com os próprios contornos de um país em lenta (e, por vezes, resistente) transformação social e educativa. Muito para além do seu lugar técnico-formativo, o EAE constitui, hoje, um campo fértil de disputas curriculares, de lutas por reconhecimento cultural e de invenção de políticas públicas orientadas para a equidade. Neste texto, procuramos problematizar o EAE como uma plataforma simultaneamente normativa e poética, onde se escrevem decretos, mas também se desenham mundos possíveis.

Desde os primeiros marcos reguladores do século XX, como os Decretos-Leis n.º 24:942 e n.º 25452 de 1935, percebe-se uma intencionalidade política de ampliar acessos e descentralizar geografias. O reconhecimento mútuo entre conservatórios, a extensão de exames para fora da capital e a legitimação de escolas em regiões insulares não constituíram apenas reformas administrativas. Foram, acima de tudo, movimentos de resistência à metrópole simbólica, inscrevendo o EAE numa lógica de democratização que, embora tímida, anunciava já o seu potencial enquanto ferramenta de justiça educativa e inclusão territorial, “não se trata, evidentemente, de ‘vocação’, mas de oportunidade” (Vieira, 2014, p. 62).

Como afirma Vieira (2014): “Sabemos, aliás, que o ensino ‘vocacional’ público tem tanta procura, que se torna necessária a existência de testes de selecção de alunos à entrada, ficando sempre um grande número de alunos excluídos.” (p. 62). Mas seria ingénuo reduzir o EAE a uma sucessão de normativos. O que aqui nos importa é interrogá-lo enquanto campo em permanente construção e reconstrução, onde políticas curriculares se entrelaçam com vivências concretas de alunos, professores e comunidades. Assumimos, por isso, uma abordagem em rede (Van den Akker et al., 2006), que compreende o currículo como sistema vivo, plural e tensionado entre três dimensões: os textos legais (currículo material), os

princípios orientadores (currículo ideal) e as práticas quotidianas (currículo vivido). Nesta leitura, os avanços legislativos mais recentes, como o Decreto-Lei n.º 55/2018, que incorpora “Cidadania e Desenvolvimento” nos currículos artísticos, ou os decretos legislativos regionais que reconhecem especificidades pluriculturais nos Açores e Madeira, representam uma viragem ética, “An effective and transformative citizenship education helps students to acquire the knowledge, skills, and values needed to function effectively within their cultural community, nation-state (...) and in the global community.” (Banks, 2008, p. 129). Aqui, o EAE ultrapassa o domínio do virtuosismo técnico para se afirmar enquanto espaço de construção de sujeitos democráticos, críticos e interculturais. Como afirma Vieira (2014), “Chega a ser irónico verificar que se começa a deixar de falar de “vocação e ensino vocacional”, porque se começa a compreender pela observação da evolução no terreno que não se trata de “vocações pré-existentes a descobrir”, mas de oferta de oportunidades, e de descoberta de “apetências”, gostos, ou vontades por parte dos alunos e das suas famílias, que anteriormente o desconhecimento e a desigualdade no acesso não permitiam sequer vislumbrar.” (pp. 67 e 68)

A música, a dança, o teatro e as artes visuais tornam-se então lugares de encontro e reconhecimento, onde a diferença não apenas é acolhida, mas celebrada como possibilidade criadora.

Partimos de uma análise qualitativa a 48 diplomas legais publicados entre 1935 e 2023, cruzando-os com pareceres do Conselho Nacional de Educação e literatura crítica sobre currículo, cidadania e inclusão.

Mais do que responder a uma tradição normativa, interessa-nos aqui reivindicar o EAE como um direito cultural e uma ferramenta de equidade. Escrever sobre o EAE é, neste sentido, também escrever sobre o país que queremos, um país capaz de escutar as vozes invisibilizadas e de lhes dar palco, som e sentido, como por exemplo:

“No entanto, tal procedimento legislativo não teve sucesso prático, na medida em que a música na educação pré-escolar e 1º ciclo do ensino básico continuou a ser ministrada por professores generalistas cuja formação não se adequava às necessidades específicas desta área do conhecimento.” (Ribeiro & Vieira, 2016, p. 1425)

Perguntas de investigação:

- (i) De que modo a legislação portuguesa (1935–2023) tem promovido, ou limitado, a democratização do acesso ao Ensino Artístico Especializado (EAE) no sistema público?
- (ii) Que dispositivos normativos favorecem práticas curriculares orientadas para a paz e a interculturalidade e como se articulam com a autonomia curricular?
- (iii) Que lacunas normativas persistem nos domínios da avaliação, financiamento, profissionalização docente e articulação territorial?

Objetivos específicos:

- (1) Mapear cronologicamente os diplomas estruturantes do EAE, classificando-os por eixo de impacto (acesso, currículo, avaliação, docência, financiamento, regionalização);
- (2) analisar criticamente continuidades e ruturas na trajetória normativa, com foco

nos efeitos sobre equidade territorial e inclusão;

(3) relacionar o quadro legal com teorias curriculares contemporâneas (Freire (1970), Dewey (1916), Young & Muller (2007), Eisner (2002); Teodoro (2020); CNE (2022); Almeida e Silva & Vieira, 2025);

(4) propor recomendações operacionais acompanhadas de indicadores de monitorização.

Contributo original, o artigo oferece

- (i) a primeira cronologia analítico-tipológica do EAE (1935–2023) explicitamente lida à luz de paz e interculturalidade,
- (ii) (ii) uma ponte entre teoria curricular crítica e normativos portugueses recentes (DL n.º 55/2018; portarias de 2018)
- (iii) (iii) um conjunto de métricas verificáveis que operacionalizam as recomendações para decisores e escolas, potenciando replicabilidade e avaliação de impacto.

Enquadramento Teórico

Pensar o Ensino Artístico Especializado (EAE) em Portugal implica reconhecer que o currículo artístico não é uma simples sequência de conteúdos técnicos, mas um espaço onde se disputam sentidos, se produzem subjetividades e se negociam projetos de sociedade. “Citizenship education should also help students to develop an identity and attachment to the global community [...] cosmopolitanism.” (Banks, 2008, p. 134)

A escola, longe de ser uma instância neutra, tem sido compreendida como parte integrante dos mecanismos ideológicos que reproduzem a ordem social, como bem apontado por Althusser (1970), o que nos obriga a questionar que ideologias são naturalizadas através das práticas de avaliação e dos modelos de ensino ainda dominantes no EAE. Esta visão crítica não exclui a necessidade de estrutura ou exigência epistemológica, mas desafia-nos a pensar que ensinar arte não é apenas transmitir um repertório eurocêntrico, mas abrir espaço para a multiplicidade de vozes, culturas e formas de expressão.

É nesse horizonte que o pensamento de Freire (1970) se torna incontornável. A sua proposta de uma pedagogia dialógica e emancipadora convoca-nos a reconfigurar o papel do professor-artista como facilitador de processos criativos e críticos, onde os alunos não são meros recipientes, mas coautores do conhecimento. O currículo artístico, nesta perspetiva, deve emergir do diálogo com a realidade dos estudantes, incorporando as suas histórias, linguagens e vivências. Tal como defendem Young e Muller (2007), não se trata de rejeitar o conhecimento estruturado, mas de assegurar que ele seja acessível e significativo, permitindo aos alunos o domínio de linguagens complexas sem abdicar da sua identidade cultural. A ideia de conhecimento poderoso torna-se assim um ponto de articulação entre a exigência técnica e a justiça curricular, ao exigir que se combinem saberes sistemáticos com práticas socialmente situadas.

Esta articulação ganha corpo quando o currículo é concebido como um processo coletivo e democrático, como advogava Dewey (1916), para quem a escola deve funcionar como uma microdemocracia onde se aprende participando, deliberando e criando em conjunto. No campo do EAE, tal implica integrar processos performativos colaborativos, oficinas de criação partilhada e projetos

artísticos onde a escolha estética é também um exercício político. Esta dimensão participativa é reforçada pela leitura de Kelly (2009), que insiste na análise contextual do currículo, sublinhando que a eficácia das reformas depende da capacidade de adaptação local. A legislação, por mais progressista que seja, só se traduz em transformação se for apropriada pelas comunidades educativas e resignificada à luz das suas necessidades, histórias e recursos.

Da mesma forma, a crítica de Eisner (2002) à padronização avaliativa obriga-nos a pensar alternativas sensíveis à especificidade da experiência artística, cuja natureza simbólica, intuitiva e emocional escapa à lógica dos testes e das grelhas standardizadas. A avaliação no EAE, portanto, deve reconhecer o processo criativo em todas as suas dimensões, incluindo o erro, a dúvida e a experimentação. Além de valorizar percursos individuais, mais do que resultados uniformes. Mesmo modelos mais estruturados como o de Tyler (1949), úteis para organizar etapas e planejar objetivos, carecem de ser recontextualizados para não se tornarem dispositivos de reprodução de uma normalidade estética excludente, sob o risco de esvaziar o potencial transformador da arte.

A esse risco soma-se a crítica de Teodoro (2020) às reformas educativas marcadas por lógicas de desempenho e de competição, que reduzem a educação a números e rankings, secundarizando a sua missão cultural e democrática.

Quando o EAE é avaliado exclusivamente por critérios de performance técnica, ignora-se o seu papel na formação integral de sujeitos críticos, empáticos e implicados nas suas comunidades. A arte torna-se, assim, instrumento de distinção, quando poderia ser ponte para a inclusão. Neste contexto, torna-se urgente garantir que os dispositivos legislativos que regulam o EAE integrem de forma efetiva práticas pedagógicas centradas na cidadania, na diversidade e na escuta ativa, não como anexos curriculares, mas como parte indissociável da formação artística.

Ao entrelaçar estes contributos teóricos, desenha-se uma grelha interpretativa que permite pensar o EAE não apenas como modalidade educativa, mas como campo de intervenção cultural e política. Um currículo artístico verdadeiramente transformador será aquele que forma para a excelência técnica sem abdicar da justiça social, que oferece acesso ao conhecimento estruturado sem apagar as singularidades culturais, e que reconhece a arte como espaço de diálogo, de conflito criativo e de construção democrática.

Nos últimos anos, a legislação relativa ao Ensino Artístico Especializado (EAE) em Portugal tem vindo a consolidar uma nova orientação curricular que ultrapassa a lógica tecnicista da formação artística, assumindo de forma explícita o compromisso com valores de paz, justiça social e interculturalidade. A inserção da componente “Cidadania e Desenvolvimento” no Decreto-Lei n.º 55/2018 marca um ponto de inflexão neste percurso, ao instituir um quadro normativo que exige às escolas não apenas a excelência técnica, mas também a formação ética, social e política dos seus alunos. Como se explicita no artigo 21.º, alínea 4), “Na ação educativa deve ainda ser assegurado o envolvimento dos alunos, com enfoque na intervenção cívica, privilegiando a livre iniciativa, a autonomia, a responsabilidade e o respeito pela diversidade humana e cultural.”, desse modo, o EAE é enquadrado por metas de participação cívica, autonomia e responsabilidade, bem como pelo respeito pela diversidade humana e cultural. Esta orientação ganha concretude através dos DAC - Domínios de Autonomia

Curricular, que conferem às escolas liberdade para desenhar projetos educativos contextualizados e colaborativos, articulando saberes artísticos com práticas comunitárias. Iniciativas como concertos interétnicos, ateliês visuais sobre direitos humanos ou projetos com embaixadas e organizações não-governamentais, integram-se neste novo paradigma transdisciplinar. A intenção não é apenas sensibilizar, mas desenvolver, em cada aluno, competências relacionais e cognitivas como a empatia, o pensamento crítico e a capacidade de agir perante a diferença, competências indispensáveis para sociedades marcadas pela diversidade.

No plano regional, tanto a Região Autónoma dos Açores como a da Madeira assumem protagonismo na concretização de políticas de interculturalidade adaptadas aos seus contextos socioculturais. O Decreto-Legislativo Regional n.º 19/2023/A introduz adaptações curriculares que valorizam o património cultural açoriano e estimulam o diálogo com outras tradições da lusofonia, promovendo uma ideia de interculturalidade enraizada. Já na Madeira, o Decreto-Legislativo Regional n.º 21/2006/M prevê o envolvimento ativo das famílias e das associações locais nas decisões pedagógicas, criando dispositivos de mediação intergeracional que integram as práticas artísticas nos processos de construção de identidade e pertença comunitária.

Complementarmente, as Portarias n.º 229-A/2018 e n.º 232-A/2018 reforçam a possibilidade de modular o currículo artístico a partir de contextos multiculturais. Estas práticas e dispositivos encontram respaldo em diversas correntes teóricas que sustentam a articulação entre currículo, ética e cidadania. Freire (1970) defende uma educação problematizadora, que emerge do diálogo crítico entre educador e educando e possibilita a construção de sujeitos conscientes das desigualdades e comprometidos com a sua transformação. No EAE, esta pedagogia manifesta-se em projetos de criação artística coletiva, em que os alunos interrogam questões como os direitos humanos, as migrações ou a memória cultural, configurando um currículo simultaneamente estético e ético.

Dewey (1916), por seu lado, insiste na escola como microcosmo democrático, onde a participação nas decisões curriculares, escolha de repertório, organização de espetáculos, avaliação colaborativa, constitui uma aprendizagem da cidadania em ato. O EAE, ao permitir que os alunos assumam um papel ativo no processo educativo, converte-se num espaço de exercício de liberdade responsável, onde a diversidade é negociada e transformada em valor comum.

Será importante, reconhecer, que a expansão do EAE, deve procurar reforçar a oferta seja a nível de orquestras ou de saídas profissionais assentes em condições dignas, o que não tem vindo a acontecer agora. Como afirma Moreira (2017) “A cada ano que passa formam-se mais músicos nas Universidades e Escolas Superiores deste país, sem que exista uma alternativa de empregabilidade válida e autossuficiente que os consiga abarcar em número significativo.” (p. 80)

A teoria do conhecimento poderoso, proposta por Young e Muller (2007), contribui para esta discussão ao alertar para a importância de equilibrar o acesso a saberes estruturantes com a valorização de epistemologias plurais. No EAE, isso implica não apenas o ensino de repertórios clássicos, mas também a inclusão de músicas tradicionais de comunidades migrantes, a exploração de linguagens sonoras não ocidentais e a criação de contextos de partilha intercultural. Desta forma, o currículo artístico torna-se espaço de reconhecimento da diferença e da equidade cultural.

Em síntese, a promoção da paz e da interculturalidade no EAE resulta da convergência entre normas legais, práticas pedagógicas e fundamentos teóricos críticos. Este entrelaçamento traduz-se num currículo que já não é apenas uma sequência de conteúdos, mas um processo relacional e situado, onde a arte se assume como linguagem de mediação social e de transformação ética. Num tempo marcado por polarizações e exclusões, o EAE revela-se como um campo privilegiado para imaginar e construir outras formas de estar juntos, mais plurais, mais justas, mais humanas.

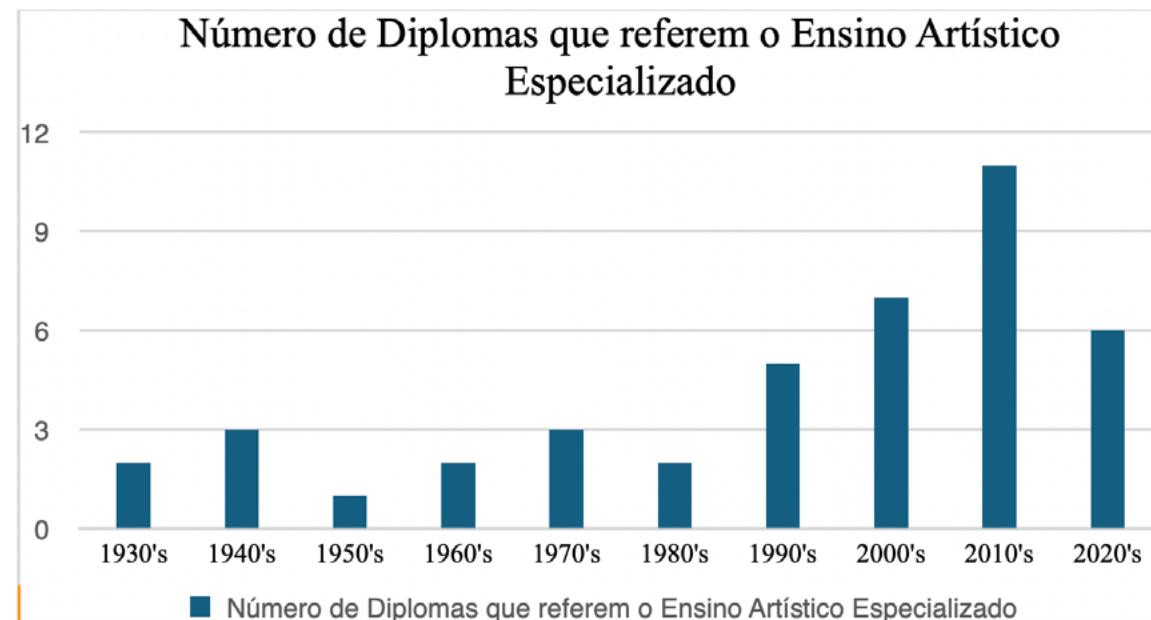


Figura 1 - Número de Diplomas que referem o Ensino Artístico Especializado

Metodologia

O presente estudo inscreve-se no campo da investigação qualitativa com orientação histórico-documental, assumindo como objeto a análise crítica da evolução normativa do Ensino Artístico Especializado (EAE) em Portugal. Partindo do reconhecimento de que o currículo é simultaneamente um artefacto cultural e um campo de disputas simbólicas, procurou-se compreender como os dispositivos legais moldam, condicionam e, em certos momentos, abrem possibilidades para práticas educativas orientadas para a democratização, a paz e a interculturalidade. A metodologia adotada estrutura-se em cinco etapas interdependentes, articulando análise documental com triangulação empírica, num esforço para manter o equilíbrio entre rigor analítico e sensibilidade contextual.

1. Levantamento e seleção do corpus legislativo

A primeira fase consistiu na construção de um corpus representativo da produção legislativa relevante para o EAE, abrangendo o período compreendido entre 1935 e maio de 2025. A pesquisa decorreu das publicações oficiais no Diário da República, recorrendo a palavras-chave como "ensino artístico", "conservatório", "currículo" e "música". Esta recolha foi complementada por pesquisa manual nas secções de legislação educativa. A seleção obedeceu a critérios de relevância estrutural: foram incluídos apenas os diplomas que introduziram alterações significativas ao nível do acesso, organização curricular, reconhecimento institucional ou enquadramento da cidadania e diversidade cultural. O corpus final resultou em 51 diplomas, cuja distribuição cronológica e tipológica foi sistematizada em suportes gráficos e tabelares.

2. Organização cronológica e construção tipológica

Com o corpus definido, os documentos foram organizados por décadas e por tipologia legal (decreto-lei, portaria, despacho), o que permitiu identificar ciclos de produção normativa e momentos de viragem política. Esta fase revelou cinco grandes períodos: i) uma fase de consolidação inicial (1935–1945), centrada nos conservatórios metropolitanos; ii) um ciclo de descentralização e experimentação (1946–1962); iii) um período de reforma e alargamento curricular (1967–1983); iv) a emergência de legislação-quadro e regimes articulados (1986–2004); e v) a institucionalização da cidadania e da interculturalidade no EAE (2018–2023). Esta leitura cronotipológica proporcionou um mapa interpretativo dos ritmos e silêncios legislativos.

3. Análise crítica dos diplomas

Cada diploma foi sujeito a leitura analítica e codificação qualitativa, com base numa grelha de análise construída ad hoc. Esta grelha contemplou cinco dimensões centrais:

- I) Objetivos declarados (ex. descentralização, harmonização, democratização);
- II) Âmbito de aplicação (territorial, disciplinar, populacional);
- III) Alterações normativas introduzidas (novos módulos, regimes de avaliação, dispositivos de recrutamento);
- IV) Implicações sociopolíticas (relações entre Estado central e escolas, inclusão territorial, legitimação cultural);
- V) Componentes de paz e interculturalidade (presença da Cidadania e Desenvolvimento, articulação com patrimónios locais, práticas colaborativas).

A análise foi realizada manualmente com técnicas de codificação aberta, registando-se excertos relevantes em fichas de leitura e software de apoio bibliográfico. Esta leitura cruzada permitiu identificar continuidades e ruturas, bem como o modo como o EAE foi sendo tensionado entre lógicas de centralização e apelos à autonomia.

4. Triangulação com fontes secundárias e enquadramento crítico

Com o intuito de enriquecer a análise normativa e ultrapassar a abstração inerente a uma leitura puramente legalista, a investigação foi sustentada por uma triangulação metodológica baseada em três eixos complementares de fontes secundárias:

Diplomas legais estruturantes, entre os quais se destacam o Decreto-Lei n.º 55/2018, que estabelece os princípios orientadores da autonomia e flexibilidade curricular, e a Portaria n.º 223-A/2018, que regulamenta a gestão do currículo nos ensinos básico e secundário, incluindo o Ensino Artístico Especializado (EAE). Estes documentos foram analisados enquanto expressão de políticas públicas contemporâneas, permitindo identificar os vetores de inovação pedagógica e os limites impostos pelas exigências de uniformização avaliativa.

Relatórios institucionais e pareceres oficiais, nomeadamente o Parecer n.º 1/2003 do Conselho Nacional de Educação, que problematiza as articulações entre o ensino secundário artístico, os modelos curriculares e a construção de identidades formativas. Este parecer constitui um contributo relevante para a compreensão do papel do EAE no sistema educativo, ao evidenciar as tensões entre a vocação artística, os regimes de desempenho e os imperativos de inclusão. Outros relatórios produzidos por entidades reguladoras e órgãos de supervisão educativa complementaram esta análise, oferecendo dados e recomendações que

permitiram contextualizar a legislação vigente. Literatura académica especializada, que inclui trabalhos recentes como os de Almeida e Silva e Vieira (2025), bem como o volume Ensino Artístico Especializado: Identidades em Construção (CNE, 2022), cuja abordagem crítica e multidisciplinar permite compreender o EAE enquanto campo de negociação curricular e de reprodução ou subversão simbólica. Estes contributos teóricos oferecem uma base conceptual robusta para interpretar os dispositivos legais à luz dos seus efeitos sociais e educativos, bem como para problematizar a relação entre currículo, equidade e participação cultural.

A triangulação destas fontes possibilitou uma leitura densificada e situada da evolução normativa do EAE, permitindo confrontar os enunciados legais com as suas implicações práticas, os discursos institucionais e os horizontes epistemológicos da investigação em educação artística. Ao integrar diferentes camadas de análise, este procedimento metodológico reforçou a validade da investigação e ampliou a sua capacidade interpretativa. O panorama atual sintetizado por Almeida e Silva e Vieira (2025) justifica as nossas métricas de profissionalização e estabilidade docente.

5. Reflexão crítica sobre validade e limitações

Reconhece-se, no entanto, que a análise documental, mesmo quando triangulada, não substitui o trabalho de campo direto com os atores escolares. A ausência de entrevistas a decisores políticos, docentes ou alunos limita a compreensão das resistências, apropriações e reinterpretações locais dos normativos. Ainda assim, a densidade do corpus e a articulação com fontes críticas asseguram uma leitura suficientemente alargada para fundamentar as conclusões do presente estudo.

Código	Definição operacional	Exemplos de evidência	Inclusão/Exclusão
Acesso	Dispositivos que regulam ingresso, seleção, expansão da rede, concursos especiais	DL 11/2020; DL 64-A/2023	Incluir diplomas que alterem provas/ingresso; excluir meras notas técnicas
Currículo	Estrutura, matrizes, DAC, Cidadania e Desenvolvimento	DL 55/2018; Port. 223-A/2018	Incluir quando cria/ajusta matriz ou cargas
Avaliação	Modos de avaliação/certificação no EAE	Port. 229-A/2018; Desp. 7415/2020	Incluir critérios e provas finais
Docência	Recrutamento, vinculação, habilitações	DL 15/2018; DL 94/2023	Incluir regimes de carreira
Financiamento	Contratos de patrocínio, procedimentos de apoio	DL 152/2013; D e s p . 8356/2022	Incluir métricas e critérios
Regionalização	Adaptações Açores/Madeira, autonomia regional	DLR 19/2023/A; DLR 11/2020/M	Incluir sempre que cria regime específico

Tabela 1- Grelha de codificação dos diplomas do EAE

Análise Crítica do Quadro Normativo do Ensino Artístico Especializado em Portugal

O percurso legislativo do Ensino Artístico Especializado em Portugal revela um esforço progressivo de estruturação e modernização, atravessado por tensões entre centralização administrativa e autonomia pedagógica, entre massificação e seletividade, entre exigência técnico-artística e inclusão social. Desde os primeiros diplomas reguladores da mobilidade interconservatórios, passando pela formalização do EAE como via legítima no sistema educativo, até à incorporação recente de componentes curriculares centradas na cidadania e na diversidade cultural, observa-se uma trajetória que, embora pautada por avanços significativos, continua a carecer de coerência sistémica e aplicabilidade equitativa no território nacional. Vieira (2014), manifesta a sua perspetiva, sobre este assunto:

“É bom de ver que se trata de mundos regidos por forças contrastantes, mesmo considerando a complexidade histórica que os atravessa: o primeiro, mergulha as suas raízes e projecta os seus objectivos no terreno da selecção, da escolha e orientação da “vocação” (perspectiva focalizada ou centrípeta); o segundo, assenta nos princípios da democratização do acesso ao ensino, do desejo de expansão da rede de serviço público, do desenvolvimento da “alfabetização” ou “literacia” musical (perspectiva centrífuga).” (p. 61)

O Decreto-Lei n.º 152/2013 marca um momento de inflexão, ao introduzir uma lógica de contratualização que redefine a relação entre o Estado e as entidades promotoras do EAE. Esta norma institui critérios de financiamento assentes na celebração de contratos de patrocínio e na avaliação do desempenho académico e artístico dos alunos. A contratualização, todavia, assume um duplo efeito: por um lado, promove uma racionalização da despesa pública e estabelece parâmetros de qualidade mensuráveis; por outro, reforça a competitividade entre instituições e potencia a exclusão de públicos escolares que não se ajustam aos indicadores exigidos. O risco de elitização do EAE, neste contexto, torna-se mais acentuado, sobretudo em regiões onde o acesso a recursos especializados continua a ser desigual.

Com o Despacho Normativo n.º 10-B/2018 e o Despacho n.º 8356/2022, o foco recai sobre os procedimentos de financiamento e de operacionalização dos contratos de patrocínio, clarificando as obrigações das escolas e as formas de aferição de resultados. Estas normas reforçam a dimensão administrativa do EAE, introduzindo mecanismos de controlo e verificação que, embora visem a eficiência, contribuem para uma intensificação burocrática das práticas escolares. Tal cenário tende a afastar os profissionais da sua dimensão criadora e pedagógica, exigindo-lhes uma constante resposta a métricas externas, que nem sempre captam a complexidade do trabalho artístico e formativo.

Como afirmam Ribeiro e Vieira (2016):

“A Administração foi regulando este subsistema, predominantemente, pelos normativos gerais e produziu uma legislação avulsa [...] sem contudo, conseguir encontrar mecanismos legais que permitissem a resolução dos problemas estruturais.” (p. 1427)

A Portaria n.º 229-A/2018 e o Decreto-Lei n.º 55/2018 introduzem, pela primeira vez de forma sistematizada, a noção de flexibilidade curricular no EAE, prevendo que até 25% da carga horária possa ser adaptada às especificidades locais e aos projectos educativos de escola. Estas medidas abrem caminho à implementação

de práticas mais contextualizadas e participativas, nomeadamente através do domínio de “Cidadania e Desenvolvimento”, que obriga as escolas a integrarem conteúdos ligados aos direitos humanos, sustentabilidade e diversidade cultural. Contudo, a tradução prática deste princípio tem sido desigual, uma vez que muitas escolas carecem de formação específica, tempo pedagógico ou recursos humanos para operacionalizar projetos transversais de forma consistente. As especificidades regionais foram também reconhecidas em diplomas como o Decreto-Legislativo Regional n.º 19/2023/A (Açores) e o Decreto-Legislativo Regional n.º 21/2006/M (Madeira), que introduzem adaptações curriculares destinadas a valorizar o património cultural insular, a promover a participação das comunidades locais e a fomentar o diálogo intercultural. Esta dimensão regional representa uma inovação relevante, ao reconhecer que a educação artística não pode ser concebida como um modelo único e centralizado, mas antes como prática situada, sensível às histórias, práticas e identidades das comunidades escolares.

No plano da valorização profissional, os Decretos-Leis n.º 15/2018 e n.º 94/2023 respondem a uma reivindicação antiga dos docentes do EAE, criando regimes extraordinários de vinculação para professores das áreas artístico-especializadas. Estas medidas permitem estabilizar carreiras e reduzir a precariedade estrutural que historicamente afeta o sector. No entanto, continuam a ser aplicadas com critérios de elegibilidade muito restritivos, excluindo professores com trajetórias pedagógicas relevantes, mas que não reúnem cumulativamente os requisitos formais definidos nos normativos.

Embora a legislação mais recente procure integrar a dimensão social e comunitária no EAE, os instrumentos avaliativos previstos nos regimes legais mantêm um perfil predominantemente tecnocrático, centrado em exames sumativos e provas finais que nem sempre refletem o percurso formativo dos alunos. As práticas pedagógicas inovadoras, como portefólios, observações sistemáticas ou projetos de criação coletiva, carecem de reconhecimento institucional formal, sendo frequentemente marginalizadas no processo de certificação. Esta lacuna entre intenção normativa e reconhecimento avaliativo levanta preocupações quanto à coerência interna do regime jurídico vigente e à sua capacidade de responder à diversidade de percursos e expressões artísticas no país.

Neste quadro, torna-se evidente a necessidade de avançar para uma reforma normativa do EAE que vá além da gestão contratual e da fixação de metas, assumindo o ensino artístico como direito de todos e como espaço de formação integral. Essa reforma deverá reconhecer a pluralidade das práticas artísticas, garantir a inclusão de públicos diversificados, valorizar a dimensão comunitária do fazer artístico e assegurar condições dignas de exercício profissional para os docentes. Só assim será possível consolidar um EAE que, para além de tecnicamente exigente, seja culturalmente situado, socialmente relevante e pedagogicamente transformador.

Década	Decreto de-lei	Portaria	Despacho	Decreto Regional	Total
1930s	2	0	0	0	2
1940s	3	0	0	0	3
1950s	1	0	0	0	1
1960s	2	0	0	0	2
1970s	3	0	0	0	3
1980s	1	0	1	0	2
1990s	4	1	0	0	5
2000s	4	2	0	1	7
2010s	4	7	1	4	16
2020s	3	0	2	2	7
Total	27	10	4	7	48

Tabela 2 - Corpus por década e Tipologia

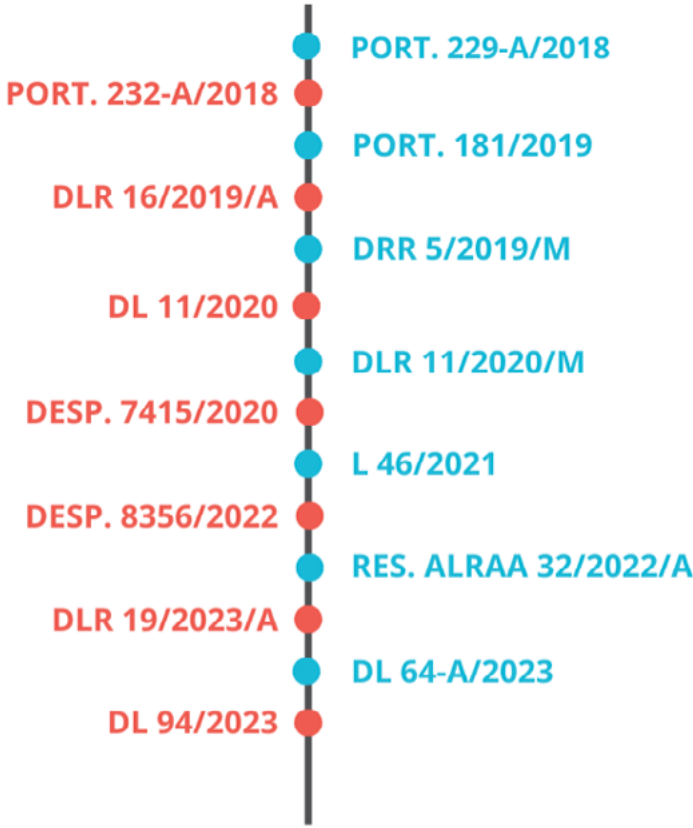
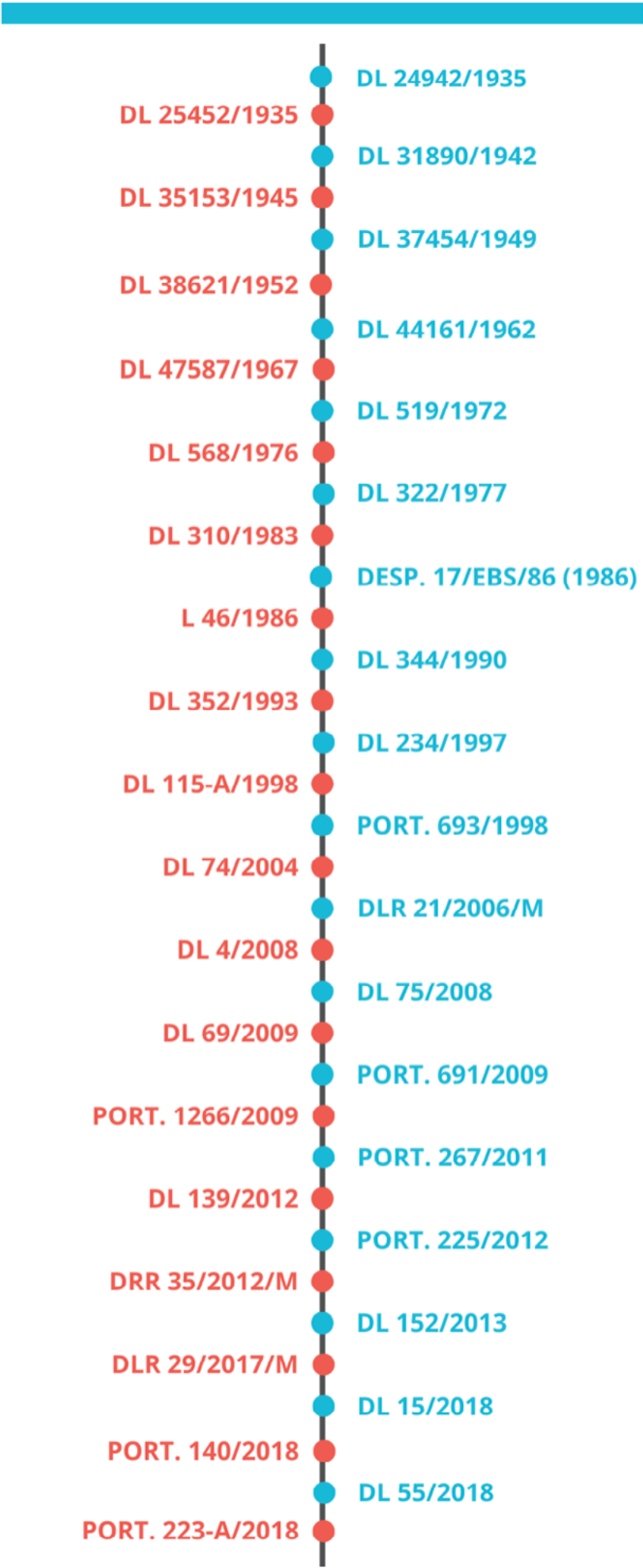


Figura 3 - Linha do tempo dos principais marcos normativos do EAE (1935-2023)

Discussão e Recomendações

A trajetória legislativa do Ensino Artístico Especializado em Portugal revela um processo complexo, evolutivo e por vezes paradoxal, no qual se entrecruzam tensões entre regulação centralizada e necessidades de adaptação local, entre a tradição normativa e a inovação pedagógica, e entre a valorização da excelência técnica e a aspiração à inclusão e justiça educativa. A análise dos diplomas legais promulgados entre 1935 e 2023 demonstra que, embora tenha havido avanços significativos na legitimação curricular do EAE e na sua articulação com o sistema educativo regular, persistem desafios substantivos no que respeita à coerência interna das políticas, à sustentabilidade dos dispositivos criados e à sua eficácia transformadora no plano das práticas.

A fase inicial da regulamentação, entre 1935 e 1945, configurou um modelo de ensino fortemente centralizado, centrado na definição de percursos normativos homogêneos e na consagração de um repertório artístico canónico, fundado sobretudo na matriz eurocêntrica. Este modelo, herdado das lógicas institucionais do Estado Novo, privilegiava a certificação, a disciplina técnica e a homogeneidade curricular, em detrimento de uma abordagem mais plural, democrática e contextualizada da formação artística. A expansão da oferta a outras geografias, como as regiões autónomas, apenas se torna significativa nas décadas seguintes, com diplomas que atribuem competências às academias musicais da Madeira e Açores, embora sem alterar substancialmente a estrutura verticalizada do sistema.

A promulgação da Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo (Lei n.º 46/86) introduz uma viragem conceptual importante, ao reconhecer o acesso às artes como modalidade curricular legítima e dotada de identidade própria, ainda que subordinada aos parâmetros do ensino regular. Este reconhecimento é reforçado pelo Decreto-Lei n.º 344/90, que regulamenta os cursos especializados, e consolidado posteriormente pelo Decreto-Lei n.º 74/2004, que introduz a possibilidade de uma via artística no ensino secundário. Estas normas marcam a passagem de um modelo exclusivamente elitista e vertical para uma tentativa de integração e articulação entre domínios distintos do saber escolar, procurando conciliar exigência técnica com abrangência formativa. No entanto, essa integração manteve-se, em muitos casos, mais formal do que substancial, na medida em que os dispositivos de articulação raramente se traduziram em práticas curriculares convergentes, participativas e interculturais.

As alterações legislativas mais recentes, a partir de 2018, com destaque para o Decreto-Lei n.º 55/2018, introduzem elementos de inovação pedagógica relevantes, nomeadamente o domínio de autonomia curricular “Cidadania e Desenvolvimento”, que pretende convocar a educação artística como espaço de formação ética, política e intercultural. Em simultâneo, as Portarias n.º 229-A/2018 e 232-A/2018 oferecem um quadro de maior flexibilidade curricular, permitindo às escolas ajustar até 25% da carga horária de acordo com as especificidades locais, um passo importante para responder às particularidades territoriais, sociais e culturais dos contextos educativos. Contudo, importa reconhecer que essa flexibilidade continua condicionada pela capacidade institucional, pelas assimetrias regionais em termos de recursos e pela formação pedagógica dos quadros dirigentes e docentes, o que torna desigual a efetivação desta possibilidade em diferentes zonas do país, “É preocupante

verificar que a procura ultrapassa em larga escala a oferta.” (Moreira, 2017, p. 111) No plano da profissionalização docente, os Decretos-Leis n.º 15/2018 e n.º 94/2023 introduziram regimes extraordinários de vinculação, que permitiram a regularização de vínculos precários no ensino artístico. Esta medida representa um avanço estrutural relevante, já que reconhece a especificidade do trabalho artístico e pedagógico dos docentes do EAE. No entanto, subsiste um problema de fundo: a falta de uma política estruturada de formação contínua especializada, centrada nos desafios próprios do ensino artístico em contextos diversos. A formação docente existente permanece excessivamente centrada em componentes técnico-formais e pouco atenta às dimensões ético-políticas do currículo, à mediação cultural ou às pedagogias para a inclusão e para a diversidade.

A avaliação das aprendizagens no EAE constitui outro ponto de tensão recorrente. Apesar da inclusão, em alguns diplomas, de referências à necessidade de práticas formativas e diferenciadas, prevalece ainda um modelo de avaliação sumativa estandardizada, baseado em provas finais e exames formais, com limitada adaptação à especificidade dos processos criativos e performativos. Esta abordagem compromete a coerência entre os objetivos pedagógicos anunciados nos normativos, como o desenvolvimento de competências socioemocionais, a cidadania activa e a criatividade, e os instrumentos avaliativos disponíveis, que continuam a privilegiar critérios quantitativos, técnicos e comparativos. A ausência de dispositivos legais claros que reconheçam instrumentos alternativos, como portefólios artísticos, autoavaliações reflexivas, observações processuais e projetos colaborativos, impede a consolidação de uma cultura avaliativa verdadeiramente compatível com os princípios do EAE.

Neste contexto, a dimensão financeira emerge como obstáculo central. O EAE, embora reconhecido legalmente, continua muitas vezes a ser tratado como setor periférico na distribuição de recursos, “o reduzido número de escolas públicas [...] corresponderá a menos de 10% das escolas da rede de ensino particular e cooperativo” (Vieira, 2014, p. 70), o que limita a sua expansão e impede a materialização dos objetivos de equidade e inclusão cultural. A inexistência de um fundo dedicado ao EAE, bem como a ausência de incentivos fiscais que estimulem o investimento privado e comunitário em projetos de educação artística, agrava a dependência de apoios pontuais e fragiliza a sustentabilidade dos programas em curso. Adicionalmente, a falta de um quadro legal robusto para a formalização de parcerias entre escolas, conservatórios, municípios, associações culturais e organizações da sociedade civil dificulta a constituição de redes educativas sólidas, intersectoriais e territorialmente enraizadas.

Para enquadrar a leitura dos resultados, clarifica-se de seguida o contributo do estudo face à call da revista e à literatura recente. O CNE (2022) evidencia assimetrias regionais; os nossos dados normativos e a proposta de índice de equidade territorial operacionalizam essa preocupação.

Ao consolidar evidência documental dispersa e traduzi-la em indicadores rastreáveis, o estudo desloca a discussão do plano meramente descritivo para uma agenda de governança monitorizável do EAE. A originalidade reside em concretizar “paz” e “interculturalidade” como resultados educacionais observáveis (currículo, avaliação, parcerias, financiamento e carreira docente) e em propor um núcleo mínimo de métricas que as escolas e a administração possam reportar anualmente.

Face a estas constatações, torna-se necessário avançar para uma nova fase de maturidade normativa do EAE, ancorada em cinco eixos fundamentais. Estas propostas seguem a lógica de ‘utopia realista’ (Rawls, 2001, cit. em Kertz-Welzel, 2021): ambição com operacionalização e métricas verificáveis.

1. Reconfiguração do modelo avaliativo, com o reconhecimento jurídico da avaliação formativa e performativa, incorporando instrumentos qualitativos que reflitam o processo criativo, o envolvimento ético e a responsabilidade coletiva, sem prejuízo da exigência técnica. Em linha com Teodoro (2020), os dispositivos de desempenho podem recentrar-se em métricas concorrenciais; os nossos indicadores procuram contornar esse risco com medidas de inclusão e justiça curricular. Como defende Kertz-Welzel (2021): “An approach aiming at political and social engagement could be supplemented by one focused on music... an open, utopian space for intense musical experiences.” (pp. 10–11)

2. Desenho e implementação de um plano nacional de formação contínua, financiado por fundos públicos e europeus, orientado para a especificidade pedagógica do EAE, incluindo módulos de pedagogia artística comunitária, educação para a diversidade, mediação cultural e gestão de projetos educativos;

3. Constituição de um fundo estruturado para o financiamento do EAE, com gestão partilhada entre os ministérios da Educação, da Cultura e das autarquias, permitindo garantir a continuidade, previsibilidade e expansão dos projetos artísticos com missão social e educativa; Pois “Torna-se assim urgente exigir da tutela aquilo que é de sua responsabilidade: que defina integralmente e de forma clara qual é de facto a missão do EAE da Música.” (Moreira, 2017, p. 94)

4. Criação de dispositivos legais para a institucionalização de redes de cooperação, através de contratos-programa que formalizem parcerias interinstitucionais, assegurem responsabilidade partilhada e promovam a articulação entre os sectores formal e não formal da educação;

5. Implementação de um sistema independente de monitorização e avaliação externa, com produção de relatórios públicos periódicos que permitam avaliar a eficácia das políticas, identificar boas práticas e ajustar os normativos às dinâmicas territoriais reais.

A consolidação de um EAE que responda aos desafios contemporâneos implica, assim, uma transformação profunda na lógica da governação educativa: é necessário ultrapassar a dicotomia entre regulação central e autonomia local, concebendo o currículo artístico como dispositivo ético-político e cultural, cujo valor excede a transmissão de conteúdos ou competências técnicas. Como afirma Moreira (2017), “É passível então [...] concluir que o EAE da Música evidencia necessitar de uma reestruturação urgente.” (p. 112)

A educação artística deve ser entendida como direito cultural, como lugar de construção de cidadania crítica e como prática de diálogo social. Para tal, não basta reconhecer a sua importância, é preciso criar as condições políticas, pedagógicas, institucionais e financeiras para que o EAE se afirme como eixo estruturante de uma escola plural, inclusiva e comprometida com a justiça cultural e social.

Recomendações	Indicador	Definição/Operacionalização	Fonte de dados	Periodicidade	Justificação teórica/normativa
1) Reconhecer avaliação formativa e performativa no EAE	C1.1 Existência de referencial interno de avaliação formativa no EAE	Documento interno aprovado em Conselho Pedagógico que explicita critérios, instrumentos (portefólio, rubricas, observação, auto/heteroavaliação) e pesos	Atas, regulamentos internos, repositório escolar	Anual	Eisner (2002) (natureza qualitativa da arte); Tyler (1949) (coerência objetivos–avaliação); DL 55/2018 (avaliação formativa)
	C1.2 Percentagem de disciplinas do EAE que utilizam portefólio/processo	Proporção de UC/disciplinas com evidências de portefólio e feedback descritivo	Planificações, amostras de portefólios	Semestral	Eisner (2002); Freire (1970) (processo dialógico)
	C1.3 Reconhecimento externo de instrumentos alternativos	Existência de despacho/regulamento interno que reconhece portefólio e projeto performativo para certificação	Normativos internos; deliberações	Anual	Alinhamento com autonomia curricular (DL 55/2018)

Recomendações	Indicador	Definição/ Operacionaliza ção	Fonte de dados	Periodicid ade	Justificação teórica/ normativa
2) Plano nacional/local de formação contínua específica em EAE	C2.1 Catálogo de formação específica disponível	Oferta formativa (horas, temáticas: mediação, inclusão, avaliação artística) validada por CFAE/IES	Catálogos CFAE, protocolos IES	Anual	Teodoro (evitar reducionismo performativo); Dewey (1916) (comunidade de prática)
	C2.2 Taxa de adesão docente	Proporção de docentes do EAE com ≥1 ação concluída no ano	RH, registos de formação	Anual	Desenvolvimento profissional como condição de qualidade
	C2.3 Satisfação/transferência para a prática	Inquérito breve (Kirkpatrick níveis 1–2) com evidência de aplicação em sala	Questionários; focus groups	Anual	Tyler (1949) (efeitos esperados)
3) Fundo dedicado e sustentável para EAE	C3.1 Existência de linha orçamental dedicada	Rubrica orçamental (central/autárquica) explicitamente afeta ao EAE	Orçamentos, PDM/PEE	Anual	Equidade e previsibilidade de recursos
	C3.2 Diversificação de fontes	Nº de fontes ativas (estatal, municipal, mecenato educativo, fundos UE)	Relatórios financeiros	Anual	Dewey (1916) (parcerias comunidade-escola)
	C3.3 Percentagem de despesas elegíveis financiadas	Proporção de despesas de pessoal, instrumentos, deslocações, mediação	Execução orçamental	Anual	Viabilidade operacional

Recomendações	Indicador	Definição/ Operacionaliza ção	Fonte de dados	Periodicid ade	Justificação teórica/ normativa
4) Redes e parcerias interinstitucionais	C4.1 Acordos-programa assinados	Nº e tipologia (conservatórios, municípios, ONG, ICC) com objetivos e outputs	Protocolos assinados	Semestral	Dewey (1916) (escola como sociedade); Freire (1970) (projeto comum)
	C4.2 Projetos interdisciplinares ativos	Projetos com coautoria (EAE + regular + comunidade), com produtos públicos (concertos, exposições)	Planos DAC; relatórios	Semestral	DL 55/2018 (DAC; Cidadania e Desenvolvimento)
	C4.3 Participação dos estudantes	Nº de estudantes envolvidos, com diversidade (género, origem, NEE)	Listas de turma; registos de inclusão	Semestral	Freire (1970) (inclusão de vozes)
5) Sistema independente de monitorização e transparência	C5.1 Publicação de relatório anual de EAE	Relatório público com dados agregados, metodologias e limitações	Sites institucionais	Anual	Prestação de contas; cultura de evidências
	C5.2 Painel aberto de indicadores	Painel digital com série histórica e metadados dos indicadores C1–C4	Portal (open data)	Trimestral/Anual	Replicabilidade científica
	C5.3 Mecanismo de feedback dos utilizadores	Instrumento de participação (inquérito/ouv. pública) incorporado na revisão anual	Registos de participação	Anual	Dewey (1916) (deliberação pública)

Recomendações	Indicador	Definição/ Operacionaliza ção	Fonte de dados	Periodicid ade	Justificação teórica/ normativa
6) Integração de paz, cidadania e interculturalidad e no currículo	C6.1 Integração curricular explícita	Evidência de UCs/Projetos que cruzam repertórios diversos, direitos humanos, mediação de conflitos	Planificaçõ es; matrizes DAC	Semestral	Freire (1970) (temas geradores); Young & Muller (2007) (conhecimento poderoso + diversidade)
	C6.2 Representatividade cultural nos repertórios	Análise de programas/ portfólios quanto a origens, línguas, gêneros, períodos	Programas; portfólios	Anual	Eisner (2002) (pluralidade estética)
	C6.3 Impacto percebido pelos estudantes	Escala breve de empatia, convivência, pertença (pré/pós projeto)	Inquéritos validados/ court scales	Anual	Educação para a paz; DL 55/2018 (Cidadania)

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تاریخ
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