

Show your own Gold: Developing ABR through biographical visual narratives with not mainstream youth

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Research paper presentation

Sub theme: Arts-based research and/or artistic research and diversified communities of scholarship.

Explicit connection to arts-based research.

Summary

The educational innovation promoted by the Erasmus+ Project “Show your Own Gold” (2014-1-DE02-KA202-001430. 2014-2017) has, as one of its aims, to situate in a theoretical, methodological and practice framework the visual biographic narratives produced by young unemployed (both, with qualifications and without job). In this presentation we want to explore the role played by artistic methods (photography, visual and written narratives of the self), to promote a form of Art based Research that involves youth and academic in an active collaborative process that allows them to not only to share, but to find ways to change their own stories.

Theoretical frame

In this project the concept of living inquiry contributes to situate and understand those contributions made by the youth. In several occasions we have explored the notion of *living inquiry* as part of a researcher and educationalist positionality (Fendler, 2013; Miño y Sancho; 2014). This notion comes from Merleau-Ponty (1962) who conceives research as an enactive space of living inquiry. In a/r/tography, for example, “living inquiry is an aesthetic encounter, where the process of meaning making and being are inextricably connected to an awareness and understanding of art” (Springgay, Irwin & Wilson, 2005: 902). From this perspective, what the “Show your Own Gold” is offering to the youth is the opportunity of being engaged in a living inquiry experience, where “living inquiry is an embodied encounter constituted through visual and textual *understandings and experiences* rather than mere visual and textual *representations*. One cannot separate, through abstract means, visual and textual interpretations of lived experiences” (idem: 902).

The research dispositive

This European project is developed in six countries: Germany, Wales, Portugal, Slovenia, Rumania and Spain. The process carried out in Barcelona involves two groups of young people

characterized by their mentors as part of : (a) 14 youth, 10 girls and 4 boys from 15 to 21 years old, who are part of a training and job placement program to become textile and leather dressmaking assistant. Although most of them have not finished their Compulsory Secondary Education, they are an enterprising group with a vivid intelligence and they are willing to learn. (b) 15 youth, 9 girls and 6 boys from 16 to 18 years old, who are part of a training and job placement program to become sales and office assistant and customer service. Group work is possible, because they do not have major conflicts and they are very concerned as a group; however, they show a very passive behaviour so that motivation needs to be reinforced.

During 12 weeks, two workshops were developed to explore competences associated to youth' self-esteem. They have learnt to narrate and recognize their own values and possibilities and project their personal stories in a biographic visual narrative (Pimenta & Poovaiah, 2010). The starting point was to integrate the young people's visual biographical narrative into their culture related to digital media (video, social communication media, mobile technology) could facilitate their personal and professional development and a positive transition to work.

Some contributions

Taking an Arts based Research living inquiry position we have been able to offer to the youth the possibility of including their experience of visualizing their biographical experiences and reflect on new personal and professional alternatives for their vocational trajectories, into a conceptual frame which could contribute to generate what Atkinson calls *real learning*. Through this living inquiry process youth have been able to: Expanding the meanings of personal memories; exploring modes of visual culture appropriations; self-authorizing to masters their own voices and share them with others; create alternative (and unexpected) intersections between images and personal stories; document and narrate to illustrate and build relationships, to educate themselves and make visible the invisible: Develop the ability to problematize a visual account beyond only show or illustrate; generating questions by transforming experience into knowledge. This means that process promoting by the Erasmus project generates "a disruption of established ways of knowing, through learning events" (Atkinson, 2012: 10) and contribute to explore alternative forms of Arts based Research.

References

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