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Arts-based research and self-identity awareness in educators for ethno-communities.

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of our university teaching in training teachers is that the students can build by themselves an identity as teacher of art education. The question is what kind of teachers they want to be; what kind of art education teachers they want to build. In all subjects that we teach, we propose this position. One of the most significant examples is the direction of Degree Projects. In them we see examples of the teaching practices of the future teachers when they are proposed to bring the arts to their concept of education.

In this article, we begin with a theoretical contextualization, then to present a concrete example of arts-based research conducted in a school in Jaén (Spain), through the realization of a Degree Project in studies for Teachers of Primary School. The project was developed in a school context with a social-exclusion situation caused by three major factors: (1) Cultural factor: gypsy families, for the most part, value formal education in a different way; (2) Institutional factor: the operation of the school is based on the values and norms of the dominant culture; (3) Socioeconomic factors: the social and economic position of the gypsy population is poor compared to the rest of society.

The article continues with a description of the development of the project. In this description, we will see which were the problems of both the social situation, and the relation with the school. It will also be reflected how the process of arts-based research begins, in such complicated context.

The article ends with a reflection of how acting artistic practice is perceived, in these contexts and situations. We finish with the result of benefits for the community with which it is worked. This is done using the conclusions drawn from the evidence provided by the project of the arts-based research in question.

Key words: Arts-based research, art education, self-identity, ethno-communities, community learning.

Introduction

The main objective of our university teaching in training teachers is that the students can build by themselves an identity as teacher of art education. The question is what kind of teachers they want to be; what kind of art education teachers they want to build. In all subjects that we teach, we propose this position. One of the most significant examples is the direction of Degree Projects. In them we see examples of the teaching practices of the future teachers when they are proposed to bring the arts to their concept of education.

Now, we are presenting a concrete example of arts-based research conducted in a school in Jaén (Spain). It was the Degree Project of Guillermo Abolafia González, which was directed by María Isabel Moreno Montoro, and together we are co-authors of this paper. We are talking about a school context with a social-exclusion situation caused by three major factors: (1) Cultural factor: gypsy families, for the most part, value formal education in a different way; (2) Institutional factor: the operation of the school is based on the values and norms of the dominant culture; (3) Socioeconomic factors: the social and economic position of the gypsy population is poor compared to the rest of society.

Before commenting on this project, we will begin to contextualize the center in which it developed, not only for the social situation of the neighborhood but because the school responds to school organization of Learning Communities, and in this context, the most important aspect for us that is how art education works in these schools?

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Learning Communities

These educational contexts for Learning Communities is a project of social and cultural transformation of a school and its environment, with the goal that all people have access to the information society, and it is based on dialogic learning (Flecha, 1997; Habermas, 1987; and Hargrave & Senechal, 2000).

The transformation of a normal school in Learning Community helps overcome school failure. In the fight against inequality, the school has an important role. It is supposed that Learning Community centers are going to transform gradually the social and educational reality of the school and its environment through the involvement of all persons engaged directly or indirectly in student learning.

In our experience, we have found that efficiency and measure the success of students is made in instrumental terms: language, mathematics and languages, technology. Thus, also underlies the

Learning Communities the same concept of education than in the traditional context. For this reason we wonder if dialogic learning is focusing towards the same goal as any other official structure of the education system: effective citizens reading and doing math operations properly, and managing ICT well and knowing languages to multiply the effect of their effectiveness.

However, the objectives of Learning Communities, have no choice but to seem beneficial to society. Objectives such as the elimination of truancy to ensure the permanence and continuity of students in the circuit of compulsory and post-compulsory schooling. Another goal would be the normalization of coexistence with dialogic resolution of conflicts (Flecha, García and Gómez, 2013). These conflicts may seem the basis of what Guerrero Seron (1996) points as the institutionalization of the educational system from s. XVII. It is the eternal dilemma about the education system and its use by state and citizenship make of it, that is to say between obedience and development opportunity.

A learning community must be conceived as open space, where you have free access to all actors in the center environment. Undoubtedly integrated by students and faculty together with other labor center staff, but also families, neighborhood or cultural associations, neighbors and co-workers and the general public, with intention and entailment with the school for the participation of educational community. The theory of these educational communities presents an interdisciplinary curriculum based on interactive learning projects where dialogue validates without exercise dominion (Aubert, Arrow, A., Garcia, Flecha, R., and Racionero, 2008).

In this sense, learning communities were presented to us as an opportunity to get into the center as something natural, or as something that the center can not be denied.

Plurality and interactivity in the way of acting.

As López-Peláez (2013: 274) points out, the current education should "rely on the methodological pluralism" because it "promotes the autonomous metacognitive learning so that the student knows his/her own learning process, understanding what she/he learns and also knows how to apply it, becoming thus the director of the teaching-learning process. "

It is not desire for art education the route that Goodson exposes to the subjects in the history curriculum, which pass from the marginality of low status to utilitarianism and then to end up being defined as disciplines formed by a rigid and rigorous body knowledge (Goodson, 2000).

Relationship and dialogue

Relational and dialogic are two concepts without which we could not substantiate either theoretically or methodologically our proposal. The relationship and dialogue are the basis of our approach in all aspects and in every way. Because relationship and dialogue in the way that they are raised us by Bourriaud (2006), hold up our resistance against stiffness which it is alerted by Goodson, encourage interactivity recommending us by López-Peláez (2013), or comprehensive dialogue referred by Tirado de la Chica (2012) around artistic action:

Because art is made of the same material as the social exchanges, it has a special place in the collective production process. A work of art has a quality that sets it apart from other things produced by human activities. This quality is its (relative) social transparency. If a work of art is successful, it will invariably set its sights beyond its mere presence in space: it will be open to dialogue, discussion, and that form of inter-human negotiation that Marcel Duchamp called "the coefficient of art", which is a temporal process, being played out here and now. (Bourriaud, 2006: 49).

The concept of relationship is embodied in the way we understand contemporary art against the contemplative paradigm.

Teacher attitude for artistic practice as a model of education

Teachers must be in a continuous process of updating and research. Artistic practices in the classroom are presented as an important method to get information and to make daily dynamics in a process of educational ethnography based on the arts.

In addition, the project method is an instrument that aims to develop the autonomy of students with active participation in all activities based on real situations of modern life.

The interaction of these two approaches allows us to think artistic practice as a model of education. From this double perspective it is that it is planned and developed the experience recounted here.

The proposal.

The educational proposal was intended to seek the initiative and eliminate the equivocation of students with any activity at school. Each student in the class, with the help of a colleague must draw its outline in any area of the classroom, playing with space freely, with electrical tape of colour black, red, or yellow.

One of the activities was that each student in the class had to draw their silhouette using a tape. Once the student finishes his/her silhouette, he/she had to help his/her partner. At



the beginning none dared to do it, many of them preferred not to do it, but one of them dared with the help of another colleague to put his silhouette. In this way, we got to be aware that they need the help of others and others theirs. Something that students do not consider at this center.

Upon completion of the silhouettes of all fellow, with the materials provided by the students and the school, the silhouettes were filled with nearby objects or meaningful to them.

The rest of the class looked expectantly, seeing that their two companions were having fun and that the result of their work was striking, and then, they wanted to do.

In this activity, before starting to create their silhouettes, it could have started with a previous phase of reflection on how we are each and share it with others to know each other. But this would be demotivating for them because they are students who need to see a result soon to perform an activity. Still, if these activities were made frequently, it will be easier that students can seek information previously, and also they could think and investigate the subject treated.



At the end Guillermo was surprised as he had never seen his students working cooperatively without them having discussions for materials or space. He got that children were not afraid to

create for themselves, to be respected, to help each other and to have a leading role in the teaching-learning process.

In many of them he noticed they changed the idea of "do not know" to take initiative without asking for their mistakes. "All what the child does is well and should be considered positive, so that shows his inner world, his personal experience." (Eisner: 2002).

Students can achieve trust and be self-confident with this type of activities. This facilitates the acquisition of personal autonomy and higher self-esteem.

With the help of this proposal, Guillermo encountered that respect of students is not earned imposing rules or laws, but making them aware of the actions they do and create with them a climate of close class on which all agree.



The author of all photographs is Guillermo G. A. and preserve the identity of children.

Final thoughts

As a conclusion or end of this reflection, we offer a brief narration of Guillermo about his experience, and after, we will propose principles for action or proposal to address the circumstances that bring us opportunities for arts education.

The narration

My experience at this school has been good although it has not been easy. At first, many teachers said I should be firm and force the students for the respect to me with punishment and voices. Well, at first not being very convinced it was a good method of work, but I did it because I thought that the experience of those professionals could not be wrong. I did it to the point where some students did not want me to be in class because I was shrieking and scolding much. In this circumstances I did not want to entering my class. Something was failing and we did not appreciate was that, there was not a good relationship between student-teacher and teacher-students. Not always what is done as a rule is what we have to do. After a while, I put aside the punishment and the voices and I tried to talk to them and earn their respect again making them appreciate me. They were asked for their interests, their customs, their brothers. I spoke with them, I was a teacher much closer, knowing something of their world. Over time, I began to notice the difference, many students did not want that I leave the school and they considered me like other teacher, or perhaps a "different teacher."

When I could give several classes without problems, I decided to carry out targeted activities that promote self-esteem and self-confidence. The day to day took me to see clearly that never mind the work we did, their words were: "teacher I do not know," "teacher this is wrong", "draw me teacher that your" ... It was clear that consideration, appreciation and valuation themselves was grim.

Arts Education promotes students and the teacher create a bond where all are participants and support each other. The latter is a fact that happened in artistic activity proposed. During class, students were unrecognizable, they not stripped the material and helped each because there was no competition for who did better others. A surprising fact since being in class, witnessed insults of all kinds, contempt, marginalization and even a case of bullying. These attitudes increasingly worried me and I asked my students if they were real friends. Many responses were silences, some said they were not school and others who had not. This is quite disturbing for children of their age and it was clear that social relations were badly damaged. I tried to make an artistic activity for collaboration among them and thus they could become aware that we need the help of others to achieve any goal we set.

The day we started the proposal, during the course of this, the class became different, children did not discusse by the material, they helped each other and all the silhouettes were perfect for all. To the point that they came to make a bottle cardboard reflecting all the names of the children in class, with the message: "Best friends". Another highlight is that the case of bullying seemed non-existent. Who used to attack was the first who offered to help the victim to form and transform his silhouette. This was somewhat surprising even for teachers who knew him.

The downside is that these behaviors were momentary. The next day, they remembered the work done, but an isolated work will never trigger a change of attitude in this type of student. However, what is certain and it has been shown is that Arts Education, and improve coexistence, fosters an emotional feeling between teacher-student and especially among student-student. For this reason, it is important to invest time and effort in projects of this nature and that such proposals are not stagnant or isolated.

Some principles for action

- (A) Proposing action instead the attitude of resignation complaint.
- (B) The union is the first action we should take, searching partners at different educational levels.
- (C) Searching colleagues in other contexts from the good relationship and dialogue.
- (D) The example is the best educational practice. The best practice that we can offer our students is to use art in education to promote relatedness and dialogue, and in turn support these successful achievement of our goals by placing them in a context of reality.

So we reviewed the relationship that we have with schools to study where the difficulty of collaboration in schools with arts education activities is focused. We see that the key is to go in the direction of dialogue and collaboration. What cooperative, dialogue and relational is not just a concept or good practice to talk to our students, it is an attitude we must adopt.

For us it is immaterial that the structure is formal, as a community at school, or informal learning through personal relationships. The good relationship is established in the attitude we adopt regardless of the structure of the system, although this help us find more official acceptance.

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