

BRAZILIAN CASE STUDY – VISUAL ARTS

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1. Brief description of the current situation of visual art education in the Brazilian Educational System

A new law of directives and basis for the national education – *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* (LDB)¹ - came into effect in 1996 in Brazil. It states that the curricular component Art² be compulsory for the basic education, which covers primary school (from 3 to 6 years old), the eight grades of secondary school (from 7 to 14 years old), and the three grades of high school (from 15 to 18 years old).

The law states: “Art Education shall constitute a compulsory curricular component, in the various levels of basic education, in order to promote the cultural development of students” (article 26, paragraph 2.)

Although LDB ensures Art Education in basic education and grants the same importance to arts as to the other subjects of the curriculum, some schools include Art as a curricular component in just a few grades of each of the levels of basic education, because the Law does not determine that Art Education should be compulsory in every grade. Some Educational General Offices are using a blind to exclude Art from the high school curriculum: they plead that art is contemplated in literature, which forms the set of contents in the Portuguese Language subject. Getting round the legislation this way demonstrates that in Brazilian education, the idea of artistic knowledge being superfluous and the verbal language being more important than visual language still prevails. As we have seen, in Brazil, neither the fact of being compulsory by law, nor recognition that it is necessary, is sufficient to guarantee art in basic education.

Experience has taught us that the situation of art education is even more problematic. Visual arts are still conceived as geometric design in many schools, which follows the positivism tradition; while in other schools, they have been relegated to a mere instrumental and decorative function, only taking part in school life either in parties or in celebrating a few dates of the school calendar, for instance: on mother’s and father’s day, Brazilian Indian day, etc. The concept of art as a free expression is still being practiced and most of the time it confuses improvisation with creativity. Though this alternative is better than previous ones, we know that spontaneity - especially in the third and fourth cycle of secondary school (5th to 8th grade) – isn’t enough, because today’s world demands an informed reader and a conscious producer.

¹ Federal Law n. 9,294, passed on December 20th, 1996.

² We use Art (with capital A) to indicate the name of the curricular component, and art (with lower case a) to refer to the area of knowledge.

The national official curriculum

The national curriculum - *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais* (PCNs) - have been elaborated since 1997 by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) to orient the different curricular components in all levels, according to the new LDB. Four principles were withdrawn from the Brazilian constitution³ and oriented the elaboration of the PCNs: the dignity of the individual as a human being, equality of rights, participation in, and mutual responsibility for social life.

The principle of dignity of the individual as a human being is understood in the PCNs as “respect for human rights, repulsion of discrimination of any kind, access to worthy conditions of life, mutual respect in public and private interpersonal relations.” Equality of rights is the need to “guarantee the same dignity and possibility of the exercise of citizenship to all”, which requires another principle be considered: the principle of equity. It is necessary to consider ethnic, cultural, regional, gender, age, religious differences, etc., for equality to exist and also social and economic inequalities. The principles of participation and mutual responsibility for social life presuppose an active exercise of citizenship: the construction of a Democratic State is the responsibility of all, which means that “the traditional political representation and the popular participation in the public scene should be complementary” (Brazil, 1998, v. 8, p. 21).

These four principles joined together, make up the citizenship hub, around which the curricular parameters for the basic education in Brazil rotate.

By establishing these principles as guidelines for basic education, MEC presumes that the educational practices are social and political and that schools are not only reproduction space, but also a space for the production of changes. That is, it proposes an education committed engaged to values and knowledge necessary for a thorough exercise of citizenship, a *cine qua non* condition for the transformation of society (Brazil, v.8, p.23). Through this perspective, the PCNs propose an education oriented by three directives:

- “to assume a position regarding social matters and interpret the educational task as an intervention in the reality of the present moment;
- not to treat values just as ideal concepts;
- to include this perspective when teaching the contents of the areas of school knowledge.” (Brazil, 1998, v.8, p.24).

By choosing citizenship as the central hub of the basic education curriculum, the PCNs propose to incorporate into this curriculum themes that make possible a reflection on social matters. Those themes should be approached in all the curricular components “in a continuous, systematic, comprehensive and combined way and not as areas or disciplines”. They are called

³ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Brazil, promulgated in 1988.

Transversal Themes, and they are: Ethics, Environment, Cultural Plurality, Health, Sexual Education, Work and Consumerism.

The PCNs should be understood by the teachers as guiding documents to their pedagogical practice, not as proposals of an imposing character, to be followed categorically. While guiding documents need to be analyzed, interpreted and criticized; they need to be adapted to the necessities resulting from differences in race, culture, gender, age, religion etc. and the social-economic inequalities present in the multiplicity of Brazilian realities.

The PCNs and visual art education

The directives for art education in basic education are presented in three documents. For primary school the directives in this area of knowledge are published in the third volume of the *Referencial Curricular Nacional para a Educação Infantil*⁴ (1998b), entitled "World Knowledge". This volume treats the six lines of work on which the primary school is established, including Body Movement, Music and Visual Arts. The orientations for secondary and high school levels are presented, respectively, in the document *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais – arte*⁵ (1997), addressed to the secondary school, and in a chapter from the document *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais – Ensino Médio*⁶ (1999). For high school there is also a document entitled *Educação profissional: referenciais curriculares nacionais da educação profissional de nível técnico*⁷ (2000), addressed to vocational high school, and one of its volumes deals specifically with the Professional Area: Design.

We could also mention the document *Programa de desenvolvimento profissional continuado - Parâmetros em ação*⁸ (1999b), two volumes, where we find the operational guidelines for the proposals presented in the previous documents.

Visual arts in primary school

The document *Referencial Curricular Nacional para a Educação Infantil*⁹, in the text about visual art education in primary school, tries to demystify the idea of the artist child, defending the idea that every child has the potential, susceptible of opening up, to express himself through iconographic images. It recommends attention and respect to be given to the characteristics of the different ages and development levels of children between the ages of zero and six-years-old and proposes educational actions that, combining sensitivity, imagination, perception, intuition and cognition, favor the development of their creative abilities (1998b, p.91).

According this document, visual arts in the education of children between the ages of zero and three-years-old should widen the knowledge of their existing world, thus enabling them to manipulate and explore different objects and materials providing them with contact with various

⁴ National Curricular References for Primary School.

⁵ National Curricular Parameters – Art.

⁶ National Curricular Parameters – High School.

⁷ Professional education: national curricular references for professional education of technical level.

⁸ Continued Professional Development Program – Parameters in effect.

⁹ National Curricular Reference for Primary School.

forms of artistic expression, in order to broaden their possibilities of expression and communication.

In the education of children between the ages of four and six years-old the visual arts should lead children to become interested in their own production, in the production of other children and in the different artistic works they will come into contact with (regional, national or international), applying their knowledge of world and culture. It should also contribute to developing taste, and care and respect for the process of production and creation.

The document recommends that visual arts in primary school be worked in two lines: production and appreciation.

Activities that lead children to manipulate and explore different materials and do work in drawing, painting, collage, printing, modeling and construction are recommended in the line of artistic execution. These activities may be either freely developed or suggested by the teacher so that children may be able to do work based on the observation of situations, scenes, people and objects or to role play themes or stories from everyday life.

The document recommends that the visual arts in children's education should have, in the appreciation line, "the greatest diversity possible and that they be meaningful to the children." (1998b, p. 103) It would also be advisable to present productions that would make it possible for the children to recognize elements that can be related to their universe. However, one should not disregard abstract productions or those that refer to space, time and cultural contexts strange to their world. The children should also get used to reading their own productions.

Regarding the teacher's role in appreciation activities, the document recommends that they stimulate appreciation, welcome and socialize the children's interpretations.

Visual arts in secondary school

The guidelines for Art education in primary and secondary school are treated in the document *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais: arte*¹⁰ (1997), which orients the four grades of primary school and for the next grades (5th to 8th grade) of secondary school.

According to these documents, the aim of art education in secondary school is that students must be able to explore, acquaint themselves with materials and procedures of each and every art language, and thus learn to express themselves through these languages and also to interpret art productions.

Another goal of art education in secondary school is to enable students to identify and organize information about processes and products of work in art, in a way to understand art as a historical and cultural production, respecting the variety of esthetic conceptions produced by different cultural groups throughout history and recognizing and understanding the different functions of art in society.

¹⁰ *National Curricular Parameters: art.*

The contents of the curricular component Art, established for secondary school, which may be approached in any order, according to the document PCN – arte (1998a, p. 52), are:

- “art as expression and communication of individuals;
- basic elements of art languages, ways of formal articulations, techniques, materials and procedures in art creation;
- art producers: lives, ages and related products;
- diversity of art forms and esthetic conceptions of regional culture, national and international: productions and their history;
- art in society, considering the artists, art thinkers, other professionals, productions and their forms of documentation, preservation and diffusion in different cultures and historical moments.”

It is stated in the same document (1998 a, p. 49) that the contents must be worked in “three guiding lines: to produce, appreciate and use contexts”.

The production line refers to the art making of students, which includes painting activities, sculpting, engraving, drawing, modeling, exhibitions, video, photography, comics and iconographic productions through the computer. The appreciation line includes reading activities of regional, national and international productions. The third line refers to knowledge to be acquired through art making and appreciation.

Regarding pedagogical procedures, the document claims that it’s the teacher’s responsibility to inform and orient, as well as to welcome the cultural repertory brought to school by students and also products from the community where the school is located and productions of several cultures carried out at different times.

Visual arts in high school

The recommendations for Art education in high school are presented in the document *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais: ensino médio*¹¹ (1999). The text makes it clear that music, dance, drama and audiovisual arts form the curricular component Art in high school.

According to this document, the aim of the subject Art in high school is “to keep on promoting cultural and esthetic development in students” so that “they will be able to acquire cultural and esthetic knowledge in production practice and art appreciation, which are fundamental for the education and social development of citizens.” (1999, p.169)

The high school PCN (1999, p. 181) establishes that Art in high school, promotes the development of proficiency and skills that make it possible for students to:

¹¹ *National Curricular Parameters: high school.*

- “Accomplish art productions, individual or in groups, in art languages (music, visual arts, dance, drama, audiovisual arts).
- Appreciate art products, in their various languages, developing not only fruition but also esthetic analysis.
- Analyze, reflect and understand the various procedures of Art, with their different material and ideal instruments, such as sociological, cultural and historical manifestations.
- Become acquainted with, analyze, reflect and understand culturally constructed criteria based on similar knowledge, philosophical, historical, social, anthropological, semi-optical, scientific and technological, among others.
- Analyze, reflect, respect and preserve the various Art manifestations – in their multiple functions – used by different social and ethnic groups, interacting with the national and international heritage, which must be known and understood in its social-historical dimension.

Concerning the education procedures, the document recommends the development of interdisciplinary activities, which involves the subjects Computer Science, Physical Education, Portuguese Language and Foreign Language which, along with the subject Art, compose the Language area, codes and its technologies. However, it emphasizes that even in the interdisciplinary projects it is necessary to have “a clear view of the specifications” of each one of the subjects that contribute to the development of these projects.

The text also recommends that art education in High School should promote the acknowledgment of how the processes of production, diffusion and appreciation undergo transformations throughout history. This acknowledgment should occur through activities that favor the collective reflection and the critical positioning of artistic practices. All of this should happen, not only in activities where the students are invited to produce, but also in activities which involve appreciation of artistic manifestations from the students’ own social-cultural environment and also of national and international productions that form the artistic heritage of humanity.

No comments have been presented regarding the document that refers to vocational high school, assuming that it is not the purpose of this work to discuss this kind of education

Considerations about the PCNs and about the PCN-art

The proposal for one national curriculum for basic education, expressed in the group of documents called PCNs, came in for tough criticism from educators, for different reasons.

First, because the educators know that no pedagogical practice can be transformed by the force of the law or written documents; these types of transformations demand changes in the

concrete working conditions, including the continuous training of teachers, better wages, changes in the education management and school infrastructures, among others. If it is up to the government to indicate the parameters that shall direct education, they should recognize that it is impossible to put those directives into effect through a single route, due to the multiplicity of Brazilian realities.

Another problem with the PCNs is that its existence reveals a tendency to homogenize education, since official evaluation systems such as the Sistema de Avaliação da Educação Básica¹² (SAEB), Sistema de Avaliação do Ensino Médio¹³ (SAEM) and the Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio¹⁴ (ENEM) are anchored to the proposals presented in those documents.

We know that the homogenization of the educational system does not guarantee the quality of education. In a country where ethnic, cultural and social diversity exist in such large proportions, a homogenized proposal is destined to fail – not only because of the difficulty of putting it into effect in certain regions or locations – but also because it could become a strait-jacket for schools that try to take into account local necessities and specifications.

This way, the government should also guarantee that all the necessary conditions for the directives outlined in the PCNs be adapted to the most diverse situations and conditions in the educational work, so that they could be implemented in the whole national territory, and not just in a few schools located in the great urban centers. The government should also guarantee that teachers, students, non-teaching professionals, families and the other members of the population be able to participate in the making of a curricular proposal that takes into account their necessities and expectations. Because a curriculum is a process, built according to the problems and necessities specific to each school; because it is forged from the values, knowledge, skills and care of those who come into contact with the school directly or indirectly.

In so far as it concerns art education, certain aspects of the PCNs must be considered: it includes the curricular component Art¹⁵ in all grades of basic education and, although it emphasizes the specifications of each one of the artistic languages, it encourages an interdisciplinary approach within a context in collaboration with other subjects when approaching the transversal themes. Accepting this idea might seem backward to many, since the proposal of art as a mean can be seen as a modernist idea which is outmoded today. However, at the moment post-modernist conceptions talk about an art entwined with life, we can evaluate how fertile the idea of approaching the artistic contents in two ways can be: as specific content of the subject Art and as a mean in the other curricular components.

One of the negative aspects of the document PCNs-Art is the fact that it still over-emphasizes classical art, as it has been established by the élitist and exclusive canons of the Western world, especially the white, masculine, European and North- American art. It relegates

¹² Basic Education Evaluation System.

¹³ Secondary School Evaluation System.

¹⁴ National Secondary School Examination.

¹⁵ In the Brazilian curriculum the subject Art cover the subjects visual arts, music, drama and dance, in primary school and secondary school; in high school it is added visual arts. Literature is linked to teaching of Portuguese Language.

to a lower level the productions of other ethnic groups, which belong to different social classes or are produced by minorities, such as women's art.

Nevertheless, the document PCNs-Art undoubtedly consolidates and makes official a radical change in art education in schools, which gained strength in the 90s, as a result, however, of a transformation process which has been built slowly since the 70s.

The directives for visual art education, presented in the PCNs- Art, are based on the "triangular proposal", formulated by Ana Mae Barbosa (1991), who was inspired by the idea of "a reading of the world", by Paulo Freire. And also by conceptions established in the core of an international movement which sees art as culture and not only as an individual expression¹⁶. The proposal is also based on the ideas of Elliot Eisner and Brent Wilson, for whom art knowledge is a result of the intersection of experimentation, reading and information. From the "triangular proposal" on, visual art education goes through a radical change in Brazil: it does not concentrate on students' artistic production anymore, but adds to it activities of appreciation and history of art studies, trying to establish the relation between these three areas and students' experiences.

One presupposes that knowledge in the visual arts must be organized in a way that would make it possible to relate the students' art production to the appreciation of handicraft and cultural manifestations through its contexts, analysis and historical information. In order to produce or read an image one must acquire interrelated skills (Dutra and Vieira, 1992).

The knowledge of relations between doing and seeing gives a foundation to new conceptions and requires new practice about and for visual art education.

However, it would be naïve to believe that the PCNs can immediately promote a transformation in art education, as advocated in its goals. It is only through the teachers' empathy and intelligent action that art will become an essential ingredient in favor of individual growth and the behavior of the citizen as a maker of culture and a participant in the construction of a Democratic State.

Some of the history of visual art education in Brazil

Until the beginning of the 90s, visual art education in Brazil was characterized either by being related to spontaneity, or by the belief that children have an expressive naiveté. This position characterizes a modernist conception, which conceives art as a free expression of feelings, which makes originality a priority among the mental processes involved in creativity. As a result of this conception, education would give more importance to students' production than to an appreciation of art production, which would impoverish the process of construction in art production. Considering that school education did not worry about promoting the appreciation of art productions, the students' imaginative universe was restricted to the products of cultural industry, with which they are always in touch.

During the 80s, Brazilian educators began to understand that art isn't only an individual manifestation, resulting from expression of feelings, but also a cultural product in which emotion

coexists with cognition. This conceptual change gives rise to a transformation in conceptions and practices about teaching art in basic education. In visual arts, educators start to understand that teaching should not concentrate just on art making and visual grammar learning, but it should also provide a construction of knowledge through appreciation of art production and art history studies.

2. The main art traditions in the field of visual arts in Brazil. For a pedagogical approach in order to introduce these productions in school programs.

Although Brazil is a country with a comprehensive and varied range of cultural traditions, due to the ethnic diversity that contributed to its formation, the penetration of this kind of cultural manifestation is either very small or almost non-existent in the school curriculum. Concerning the extension of its territory, with such different geographic features and the diversity of the cultural roots of the men and women that dwell in it, it's possible to verify that in each of the country's regions there is a multiplicity of handicraft made of clay, wood, tin, scraps, pottery, thread, fabric, etc.

Unfortunately, there is no governmental policy to stimulate the traditional art productions, or one that aims at their preservation and diffusion, there are only a few isolated and sporadic actions. This disregard for artistic manifestations and traditional handicrafts is evident from the small number of museums devoted to this kind of art¹⁷.

The biggest incentives to artistic manifestation connected to our traditions and to basic Brazilian values have come from the private sector¹⁸ and from foundations, which have been promoting events and exhibitions of the traditional arts. Those institutions have had an important role in the incentive to the production, preservation and diffusion of the traditional arts, promoting workshops and exhibitions and publishing catalogues, books and magazines on the subject.

This picture reflects the visual art education scenario in all levels of schooling. Manifestations of traditional art take place in schools only in August, a month which celebrates the Day of Folklore, and which is forgotten throughout the rest of the year. This indicates a reductionist and élitist conception of traditional arts, seen as a picturesque and exotic production, therefore, less important.

This might be for two reasons. First, because the curriculum of teacher training courses does not include a wider and deeper study of the Brazilian traditional arts. There are also few publications on the subject, and even rarer are educational works that focus on the traditional arts.

¹⁶ The movement led to programs such as the DBAE, in the United States of America, and the Critical Studies, in the United Kingdom.

¹⁷ There is the Museu do Folclore (Museum of Folklore) in the Memorial da América Latina (Latin America Memorial), and the Museu Etnográfico da Universidade de São Paulo (University of São Paulo's Ethnographic Museum), both in São Paulo.

¹⁸ SESC, Fundação Brasil 500 anos, Instituto Itaú, Unibanco, Banco do Brasil among other institutions.

A change in this current situation demands various and different types of actions. First of all, a public policy that values these arts, through programs that stimulate its production and diffusion. Second, the Art Degree courses for teachers would have to set aside this élitist view that predominates in them, assuring in their curriculum room for a more comprehensive and deeper study of the traditional arts.

This is not simply to deny what comes from abroad out of mere opposition to globalization, or in the name of an outmoded nationalism. On the contrary, we understand the need to be open and receptive to international productions that express a genuine creative force. However, we must not forget to value and pit our local talents against them, including among them those coming from the most popular layers of society, which are able to express our roots and what is truly ours, bringing out the features of our physical territory and of the imagination of the Brazilian people.

One can conceive of many ways of valuing the traditional arts in the school curriculum, and some of them may be outlined here. For instance, stimulating students to research the community where their school is located, and their families on the artistic practices expressed in the various social groups they have contact with. Students can also be stimulated to visit those places where men and women develop traditional art production, either as a source of pleasure or income, such as: crochet, knitting, embroidery, weaving, clay modeling, wood carving, hand-crafted toys, tin objects, paper or fabric flowers etc. During the visit they can collect oral testimonies from the craftsperson, observe and record through drawing, photography, audio and audiovisual recordings the process of production and its products.

Some projects of this kind are being developed with success, such as that directed by Ivone Richter (2000), developed in Santa Maria (RS), and another directed by the teachers Elizabeth Militinsky de Aguiar, Célia Maria von Mengden Meirelles and Eliane Stahlberb Wolffenbuttel, developed in Florianópolis (SC), as well as the project directed by Célia Maria de Castro Almeida (2000), developed in Campinas (SP)¹⁹.

3. The major lines of a curriculum aiming to introduce the teaching of visual arts in primary and secondary school.

There seems to be a consensus among educators that art education does not aim for the training of artists, but aims to enable the building of values, knowledge and skills necessary to life in society. How can art contribute to reaching those goals?

Considering the expanse of the Brazilian territory, where the most diverse situations and conditions of education co-exist, with their specific necessities, we can understand the impossibility of accomplishing those goals through standardized educational contents and procedures. Thus, in order not to make the mistake of believing that a single educational model

can cover the plurality of educational realities in Brazil, we thought it would be more suitable to present here some general recommendations and principles that could orient visual art education towards the various forms that it adopt, depending on the school.

For a new paradigm for Art Education

The epistemological and methodological parameters that govern art education in basic education underwent great changes in the last decade, at least in theory. Ana Mae Barbosa's "Triangular Proposal" (1991) contributed a lot to those changes. According to her proposal, Art Education should settle on three lines.

The first is students' productions. Even though the goal of art education in school is not to train artists, art making is important, because it makes possible the building of practical skills and knowledge, characteristic of the sensitive and expressive universe, necessary for the training of producers, distributors and critical consumers.

The goal of the second approach is to make it possible to understand that the arts are expressions of identity and culture and, thus, that art work demands a lot more than seeing and hearing, it requires being aware of the parameters that transcend personal taste, which are also historically and socially constructed.

Knowing that art can only be understood in the context of a historical and socially produced culture, this appreciation will take place through the historical, social, anthropological and esthetic context of the art work. The reading of the visual elements should not be reduced to an analysis of form, color, balance, movement, rhythm, but it should also aim at discussing the meanings that these attributes grant the image in different contexts. It is not about asking what the artist meant with his work, it is a matter of asking what the work tells us here and at this very moment, and what it tells us or told other readers in other historical and geographical contexts.

The third line - developed through linking the first two – deals with the construction of knowledge in art history and esthetics. It is by appreciating and doing that students will learn about materials and art procedures, about the different ways of using colors, lines, shapes, they will understand the organization of elements in space and the relation between form and content, distinguish between styles and types of art, etc., as well as learn about the plurality of cultures and social groups.

The history of art, esthetics, fruition and art production fields of students, are inserted in a process where value constriction, theoretical and technical-expressive knowledge, acquisition and development of skills are given the same attention.

It is important to mention the teachers' role in this learning process, where art making, appreciation and putting work into context, merge together and complete each other. Their job is of great value, because it is through them that the relations which allow the construction of knowledge, values and skills are passed on to students. It is the teacher that mediates and leads the learning process. The teacher's role is fundamental, especially where the appreciation of art

¹⁹ To know more about the two first projects please go to <http://cspace.unb.ca/idea>.

is concerned. The idea that it is enough to present students with the work to be appreciated, in appreciation activities, and making materials available and describing art procedures, in production activities, is outmoded today. The teacher should provide students with the possibility of sharing the sensitive aspect and of giving meaning to art productions.

Cultural identities and the construction of human values through art

The school environment is frequently a place of violent conflict, not only among students themselves, but also between them and their teachers, or between students and other professionals that work in this area, not to mention the conflicts between parents and educators. For those who are directly involved in the everyday life of the school environment, it is clear that students find it difficult to face their differences and solve their daily life conflicts. This is a problem that affects schools worldwide. Therefore, educators point out that it is the school's responsibility²⁰ to attend this pressing necessity of educating for citizenship.

Faced with this problematic situation, how can art - especially visual arts – contribute to the construction of ethic values and citizenship?

Being a personal expression, as well as a cultural one, art contributes to personal development and to the constitution of a cultural identity; through art it is possible to grasp the realities of the environment and develop perception, imagination, creativity and criticism, abilities that make the understanding and transformation of these realities possible.

Many educators believe that art favors creation or sedimentation of affections and makes men and women capable of understanding themselves as individuals inserted in a social-cultural group, which broadens the understanding of their place in the world (Ford, 1999). Through the appreciation of the most diverse cultural productions, art teaching will also contribute to students' constructing values, like respect for diversity and solidarity (Mason, 1999; Saccá, 1999).

For this to come true, the activities of art appreciation must not concentrate on the production of white Europeans and North-Americans, but needs to contemplate the productions of different ethnic and gender groups and at the different social levels. It is necessary for schools to promote knowledge of local cultures, cultures of the various groups that characterize a nation and also of cultures of the most different cultural groups of other nations. One can include in this selection the productions that are traditionally classified as classical, as well as traditional and popular art and the productions of mass culture²¹, not giving them distinctions in value.

Unfortunately, this is not what happens in most schools, where only "classical" productions are introduced the students' appreciation. Cultures produced by economically deprived social classes are excluded from school curriculums, including for schools where most of the students belong to these social classes.

Defending the inclusion of work produced by different social classes and by different ethnic groups, does not mean defending cultural ghettos or denying access to "classical" culture

²⁰ The Delors Report for UNESCO (1996).

²¹ There is no intention, through this sequence, to establish a hierarchy of importance.

to popular classes. Everyone has a right to access this culture, but the school must not ignore the students' cultural references, neither the mass cultural productions nor the traditional arts; on the contrary, it must present and value them equally, trying to emphasize the relations that they establish among themselves. So, knowledge is a historical and social construction, just as artistic sensitiveness, characteristic of each cultural group, is historically formed. Thus, appreciation must not concentrate on so-called classical productions, it must consider the plurality of cultural production.

Between global and local, the formation of critical consumers

Along with the advancement of new technologies, global culture assumes a privileged dimension, to the detriment of local culture. Lacking the necessary knowledge to critically and selectively evaluate contemporary massive cultural production, students become passive consumers of this pasteurized culture, which invades media and even didactic and non-didactic books.

In the contemporary world, where iconographic images have a fundamental role, the necessity for visual literacy reaffirms the importance of the presence of visual arts in school. In our daily lives images broadcast by the media sell products, form ideas and model behavior. Unable to read those images, we submit ourselves to them, succumbing to their appeal without being aware of it. Thus, there is today a strong tendency to include in visual art education programs the critical reading of still and moving images present in the media.

Besides creating conditions for the development of imagination, creativity and esthetic sensitiveness, visual art education should promote the education of the "seeing", contributing to the training of citizens able to appreciate and critically understand the artifacts and cultural manifestations produced by humanity.

Visual arts as a support for professional training

Another aspect that should be emphasized is that knowledge in the visual arts is of critical importance for certain professions. A great number of professions are directly or indirectly related to advertising movies, TV, video, the publishing market, the textile industry, fashion, decoration, etc. Today, we cannot conceive a professional of any one of those areas that does not have any knowledge in Art history. The critical knowledge of how formal, visual, social and historical concepts are manifested in art, and how they have been noticed, redefined, redesigned, distorted, discarded, re-appropriated, reformulated, justified and criticized in the constructive processes, can enlighten the work demanded for the exercise of those professions.

We should also emphasize that a computerized and globalized society demands new knowledge and skills, tuned with the new technologies. It demands creative professionals, able to deal with unpredictable situations, abilities that should be enhanced through experiences like creating and critically appreciating artistic productions.

For an interdisciplinary education, within a context and in tune with the contemporary world

Interdisciplinary activities provide students with the opportunity to compare, complement, broaden or understand aspects of a certain fact or phenomenon, usually impossible to understand unless it is put in confrontation with other areas of knowledge.

It is therefore recommended, that art education contemplate an interdisciplinary approach, that makes it possible for students to seek relations between visual arts and other artistic languages, or to establish connections between artistic contents and contents from other areas of knowledge. This can be done, for instance, through thematic projects, in which there is the participation of visual arts and other curricular subjects.

The approach to a subject within the vision of different artistic languages of different fields of knowledge make it possible to cover it in a more complete way. The interdisciplinary approach of contents subvert the sequential and compartmentalized organization of the contents, usually not related to concrete experiences of students. It also makes it possible to relate what is set aside in time and space and to discuss current subjects, especially those related to students' experiences. Searching for interaction between school knowledge and other different types of knowledge, it favors a critical and constructive appropriation of knowledge.

We would like to remark that one of the characteristics of globalization is the approximation of times and distances, and, in post-modern art, the relations it establishes with everyday life and with mass culture. Such characteristics demand an interdisciplinary and contextual approach to visual arts, starting from the students' own cultural universe. For instance, it is possible to leap from mass production – magazines, newspapers, TV, movies, graffiti – or from popular habits among teenagers, such as tattooing and body piercing, to artistic works such as Warhol, Lichtenstein, Basquiat, and Alex Flemming, among others; or, vice versa, go from Cordel literature to advertisement or engravings by Durer. There are multiple ways, but this is not the time or place to present them²².

In short, putting educational contents into a context provides students with a meaningful learning. When, in the process of education, students confer full meaning to their experiences, they change from the condition of mere spectators to protagonists.

Final note

In primary school and in the first cycles of secondary school (from 1st to 4th grades) art education should take place through exclusively practical activities; from 5th to 8th grades of secondary school and in the three grades of high school it should include theoretical studies and practical activities. It is desirable to ensure art education at least two hours a week, during the

²² See Almeida, 2000.

entire school year, from primary school to the 8th grade of secondary school, and at least one hour a week during the three grades of high school.

4. How can teachers be trained to teach visual art education? Could artists contribute to the teaching of visual arts in schools? Under what conditions could this happen?

In 1971 the Lei de Diretrizes e Bases para a Educação Nacional n. 5, 692²³ abolished the subjects Musical Education and Drawing from the basic education curriculum, replacing them with Artistic Education, considered an “educational activity” and not a subject. In order to meet the new legislation many degree courses in Artistic Education were quickly created, most of them offering a qualification in Plastic Arts and Drawing. Those courses, responsible for the training of teachers qualified to teach Artistic Education were offered in two kinds: As a full degree – a four-year course that qualified teachers to teach in secondary and high school – or as a short degree – a two-year course that qualified teachers to teach only in secondary school.

Nowadays, the shorter degree has been abolished. The Artistic Education degree course trains teachers of art that opt for a specific qualification: qualification in Music, Drama, Drawing and Plastic Arts or Visual Arts. The vast majority of Artistic Education degree courses only offer the Qualification in Plastic Arts and Drawing. A possible explanation for this might be the strong influence of positivist ideas in Brazilian education. The positivism used to consider drawing – specially the decorative drawing and geometrical drawing – indispensable to the education of the working classes.

Given those three possibilities of qualifications offered by the degree course in Artistic education, its curriculum subdivides itself into three parts. One is a more generic part composed of the specific subjects of the chosen qualification corresponding area (e.g.: Corporal Expression, Mime, Dance, Vocal Technique, among others, if it is a qualification in Drama; Painting, Drawing, Engraving, Sculpting, among others, if it is a qualification in Drawing and Plastic Arts or Visual Arts; Choir Singing, Vocal Technique, History of Music, among others, if it is a qualification in Music). The second group is composed by artistic subjects complementary to the qualification (e.g.: Corporal Expression, Choir Singing and Music and Drama History for the qualification in Drawing and Plastic Arts or Visual Arts). The third group is composed of the so called pedagogical subjects: Didactic, Teaching Practice, Psychology of Development and of Learning, Structure and Functioning of Teaching, etc.

This type of generic training, resulting from a curriculum that treats the specific contents of the different artistic languages in such a quick and superficial way, has been highly opposed by educators in the past years. More recently, degree courses have been created that deal exclusively with one specific area: a degree in Music, a degree in Drama, a degree in Dance and a degree in the Visual Arts.

At most public schools the art teachers who work in the first two cycles of basic education (1st to 4th grades) do not have any training in art, because the curricula of the teacher training courses for the initial grades that offer subjects in the artistic area are few. When offered, they consist of just a small percentage of the entire course curriculum.

Many regions lack graduate teachers, due to the country's great diversity and art education – even from 5th to 8th grade and in high school – ends up being taught by lay teachers or teachers graduated in other areas of knowledge, but not arts. Teachers who have a degree in arts are concentrated in States of the South (Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul) and South-East (São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo). It is important to emphasize that the lack of graduate teachers is a problem that affects not only the art areas, but also all other areas of knowledge of the school curriculum.

Many consequences result from the incomplete or deficient training of teachers working in basic education. Mistaken conceptions and practices perpetuate in the school system. Didactic books, which, in the majority are awful, also contribute to this by spreading an outmoded conception of art education.

This situation will only be changed if a policy of initial and continuous training is established, which should not be restricted to extension courses. Due to the small number of hours in class and their tendency to be discontinued, these courses do not have the power to gear effective changes towards the pedagogical practice of teachers. These changes will only occur if the training is continuous, provided with material support and accompanied by a valuation of the teaching career through better wages.

Teacher training courses must also be thought over. All art degree courses that form the specialist teacher – because the current ones were meant to attend the LDB 5,692, which is not in force anymore -, as well as those intended for the training of teachers that will work in primary school and in the first four grades of secondary school. In the latter, it is fundamental to ensure in the curriculum of these courses, the presence of subjects that provide theoretical and practical aid, which are necessary for the generalist teacher to teach art.

Brazilian authorities who are also education professionals recommend that training courses for teachers for basic education must: provide a solid theoretical and interdisciplinary training; b) seek the unity between theory and practice; c) encourage collective work and reflection; d) engage in the social commitment of education. All in all, the training of these teachers must provide studies and practice that allow them to build knowledge through which they will not only understand, but also intervene in their work realities.

Programs of continuous training mainly concentrated on collective work are also necessary. They provide mutual support to studies, reflection and exchange of experiences and are organized on the basis of the necessities felt by teachers. The continuous formation may broaden the universe of knowledge and teachers' experiences and collaboration on their

²³ Law of Directives and Foundations for the National Education n.5, 692.

professional development, which would favor the implementation of new proposals of education in art.

Concerning the visual arts, a program to encourage teachers to have a direct contact with art productions, through visits to galleries, museums and cultural centers is fundamental.

Finally, the public powers must provide the means for teachers, in their training – initial or continuous - to develop abilities that will allow them to understand, conceive, produce and enjoy art. Without the exercise of practices of production and fruition of art, no theory will be enough to promote the transformations proposed by the PCNs.

About the partnership between teachers and artists

We understand that the guiding of the educational process is always up to the teacher. But the collaboration of the artists could be a way of bringing the school nearer to life in society. Artistic education projects developed through partnership between teachers and artists can provide students with a more vivid experience of the artistic practices in society. Once this partnership is established, many possibilities for work are opened up. For instance: a visit to the artist's studio could enable students to discuss and become acquainted with the process of production of the art work. An exhibition could give the opportunity to meet and interview the exhibitors, and to better understand the art works through a discussion about them with their authors. Artists can also collaborate with the school, developing projects in partnership with teachers of Art. Unfortunately, in the public schools in Brazil, there is no possibility of remunerating an artist who is willing to carry out this type of project in a school, making this idea difficult to realize. But many artists, even without receiving any remuneration, are willing to collaborate with schools when invited. Some projects of this nature have been developed with success. We mention, for instance, the project "Art in daily life and in school" (Almeida, 2000). In this project students from the first grade of secondary school from a public school in Campinas (SP) went to visit the studio of an artist, located in the same district of the school. The artist talked a long time to the students about the exhibited art work, explaining to them in detail. The students photographed the work and interviewed the artist. Later the interview was published in the school paper and a small exhibition presenting the reports about the visit to the studio, illustrated with pictures and drawings, was set up in the classroom. On another occasion, the same artist collaborated directly with the school teacher, guiding the students from 5th grade classes in the execution of a mural. Still in the same project, another artist was invited to go to this school, where she set up a small exhibition and talked to secondary school students about her work.

The participation of artists in projects turned to visual art education should be encouraged, because the direct contact with the artist and their work provide students with a concrete experience in cultural practice and production. Working with the artists enable students to share with them their sensitivity with them, their wisdom and their practical experiences. In

order for this to happen, though, it is necessary that the sectors responsible for the basic education set aside funds for the remuneration of artists willing to collaborate with schools.

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