

Research article

Becoming arts education researchers through a poetic collaborative self-study

Convertirnos en investigadores en educación artística a través de un autoestudio colaborativo poético

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Abstract

Introduction: In a collaborative project involving teachers and students of a PhD in arts education, a poetic self-study was carried out to problematize the learning processes of becoming researchers in this field of study. **Methodology:** The paper focuses on the experiences of the researchers-educators, recorded in their diaries, by analysing and debating topics and research methodologies, but also their learning. The poetic and collaborative nature of this inquiry is emphasized through the presence and cross-referencing of narratives, visual essays and poetic writings. **Results:** Becoming researchers in arts education is a complex and a never-ending task. In this project teachers are researchers of their own processes of becoming teachers and researchers, and the results are the presentation of the several layers of productions they made. **Discussions:** All the experiences that researchers live are experiences to be questioned, interpreted, reinvented through reflection, writing, dialogue. Arts become modes of inquiry, of teaching and of creative production. **Conclusions:** Becoming researchers is, therefore, experiencing theory in practice, expanding knowing by arts creation and fruition, inventing and proposing research situations to reflect in and on action.

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Keywords: arts education; researcher; self-study; collaborative processes; arts-based research; writing; poetic; higher education pedagogy.

Resumen

Introducción: En un proyecto colaborativo entre docentes y estudiantes de un doctorado en educación artística, se realizó un autoestudio poético para problematizar los procesos de aprendizaje sobre convertirse en investigadores en este campo de estudio. **Metodología:** El artículo se centra en las experiencias de los investigadores-docentes, registradas en sus diarios, para analizar y debatir temas y metodologías de investigación y sus aprendizajes. El carácter poético y colaborativo de investigación se enfatiza a través de la presencia y el cruce de narrativas, ensayos visuales y escritos poéticos. **Resultados:** Convertirse en investigadores en educación artística es una tarea compleja e interminable. En este proyecto los docentes son investigadores de sus procesos de hacerse docentes e investigadores, y los resultados son la presentación de diversos niveles de producciones que realizaron. **Discusiones:** Todas las experiencias que viven los investigadores son cuestionadas, interpretadas, reinventadas a través de la reflexión, la escritura, el diálogo. Las artes se convierten en modos de investigación, enseñanza y producción creativa. **Conclusiones:** Convertirse en investigadores es, por tanto, experimentar la teoría en la práctica, ampliar el conocimiento mediante la creación y fruición de las artes, inventar y proponer situaciones de investigación para reflexionar en y sobre la acción.

Palabras clave: Educación artística; investigador; autoestudio; procesos colaborativos; investigación basada en las artes; escrita; poética; pedagogía de enseñanza superior.

1. Introduction

How are we becoming researchers in art education? The question arose in a PhD Art Education lesson, serving as the basis for the class assignment in that academic year, and used by the two teachers as the trigger for a joint reflection. Our (professional) destiny threw us together in the academic year of 2016/17 within the scope of the Art Education PhD (AEP) a co-tutelage between Oporto and Lisbon University. Over the years, we experimented several approaches for art education in higher education, with heterogeneous classes comprising professionals from a variety of artistic backgrounds, ranging from musicians, painters, dancers, sculptors and educators, trainers and teachers from the different educational areas and levels.

We always involve ourselves directly in the activities, whether proposed by us or the students, from a *learning by doing* perspective in which the teacher also has a duty to learn. In previous years we did research of our PhD teaching work (e.g., Paz y Caetano, 2018, 2019; Caetano y Paz, 2018), sometimes involving some students to do retrospective narratives research (e.g., Caetano *et al.*, 2019, 2020), but we felt that we needed to go further and bring all the class together since the beginning of the research. This project is closely related and contributes to another research project, focused on the teaching work and, within it, on the pedagogical practices of Portuguese universities and polytechnics - STORM - (Re) Configurations of Teaching-Learning and Higher Education Organizations in a Context of Change.

For this specific paper, we decided to focus on our joint experience in the PhD, during the academic year that was starting, with the same questions of the broader poetical self-study research project with the all group - DEA_ACP - Doutoramento em Educação Artística - Um autoestudo colaborativo poético [Arts Education PhD- A poetic collaborative self-study].

We defined two research questions:

- a) How are we becoming researchers in art education when we reflect on and write about our educational experiences;
- b) How does poetic collaborative self-study give us a collective understanding and critical positioning in our research field?

To move forward we proposed narrative written processes focused on educational experiences, in the spheres of art education that each one was involved in.

Like us two, other subgroups of the seven PhD students emerged and organized themselves in line with their contexts, namely in higher education, primary education and secondary education, and in non-formal education contexts. This work in progress had already started to be presented publicly, with the group creating a panel on the topic containing five communications at a scientific congress (Caetano *et al.*, 2022, Caetano y Paz, 2022; Paz y Caetano, 2022).

In this article we will deepen our exchange of ideas and collaboration based on cross-referencing our diaries, to a joint reflection about the work we carry out. The continuous process of writing our narratives, poems and reflections during the academic year is a movement of engagement to ensure continuous pedagogical reflection and transformation.

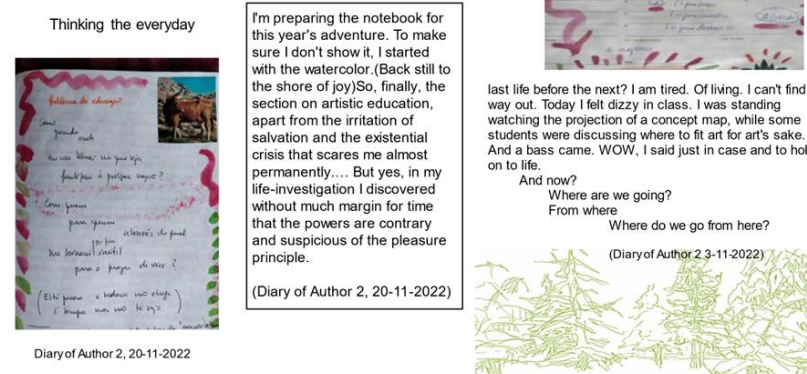
The idea was to develop several layers of research in order to unclothe our process of becoming researchers in the field of art education. The first layer is represented by the continuous writing of narratives and reflections about our teaching, debates and productions during one school year of the PhD course. The second layer is the analysis and presentation of that work, intertwining previous registrations with the authors that supported us, in order to problematize arts education and its research agendas and methods. The third layer is the discussion of our own learning as researchers when we study our teaching in this particular field.

These diaries are simultaneously a source of data about topics in art education and research, that we shall present and discuss, and are also an object of methodological reflection, as we intend to provide considerations about the collaborative written processes and its scientific potential, which fit into an arts-based methodological practice (*e.g.*, Barone y Eisner, 2012; Chilton y Leavy, 2014; Patrick, 2016; Greenwood, 2019; Ware y Dunphy, 2019). In this article we seek to continue to deepen the perspective of the narrative approaches, based on arts and dialogical processes, and how these are constituents of our investigative processes in this field. To do so, we bring excerpts of our records, and we based our reflection on them with regard to the educational processes and theoretical problems dealt with in the lessons and we discuss the role of this joint project in our training as researchers in art education.

Figure 1

Composition of the initial records

POETRY OF THE DAYS



Source: Ana Paz's Diary.

This paper is organized in line with the curricular sequence of lessons throughout the academic year in our university, split in two semesters. We start by discussing some of the problems and relevant authors in the art education field, which we worked on in the lessons of the first semester. Secondly, we integrate data and records referring to the methodology lessons of the second semester, where the PhD students organized lessons to work on their methodological options and tried out research processes with the collaboration of colleagues and teachers, incorporating art processes. After this presentation and discussion of the educational processes in the PhD, we develop another section focused on our research questions around our process of development as researchers in this field, and on the processes of writing, namely poetry. In each of the sections we intertwine theoretical texts and the ideas of benchmark authors who we cited throughout the entire work.

We invite the readers of this paper to follow this sequence as if they were participants in our classes, and to problematize the issues we evoke, related to research and arts education. In each lesson we elect one main issue, although there are recursivities between them. It is an invitation to enter in the dynamics we lived in and to open to our questions.

2. Methodology

2.1. Theoretical-methodological background - Self-study, art and poetry

Self-study is research that involves the study of the self by the self (Samaras y Freese, 2006), with a view to lending meaning to the practice and to develop greater understanding and development. In the specialized literature on the subject the five predominant features of self-study research are frequently referred to: the researchers themselves take initiative for the self-study, assessing their own practices; focus on improvement; it is carried out interactively and collaboratively; a range of methods are used, mainly of a qualitative nature; data-based validation to establish trust in this type of research (Mena y Russel, 2017).

We drew inspiration in the work of other authors about the use of artistic processes in the development of self-study (e.g., Hopper y Sanford, 2006; Pithouse-Morgan y Samaras, 2019; Samaras y Pithouse-Morgan, 2019; Edge y Olan, 2021).

In the collaborative self-study we aimed to develop, the poetic writing dimension came very much to the fore. Poetic self-study is a method based on the literary art to research and to deepen professional learning (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2019), whereby the primary intention is not to create poems that satisfy literary or artistic criteria. In contrast, the purpose is to use poetic methods and language to explore and develop professional learning and practice (Pithouse-Morgan, 2021).

2.2. Methodological processes

To carry out our project we started with an inspirational text about poetic collaborative self-study, in which Hopper and Sanford (2008) present research carried out within the scope of initial teacher training and where they use interviews with students about their experience in becoming teachers to construct a poem with their words, which “should be read as a co constructed representation of the experience of becoming a teacher. The researchers have selected the participants’ words but the words are only what the participants have said” (p.36). This poem was later presented to other students, in subsequent years. As such “the research study took on a form of critical reflection for the participants whose words created the poem and for novice student teachers who subsequently read the poem” (p. 35).

The text by Hopper and Sanford was read by the group. After critical analysis, we believed we should advance to a more open and emerging process:

In favour of the task undertaken, I highlight the idea of returning the work to others to continue it. I believe this will be an interesting idea to recuperate for our project.

Another aspect that was strengthened is to view the poetry as building knowledge, language and attitude that gives rise to multiple reading possibilities for the readers, giving them space). Also, the idea of self-study, self-discovery, self-observation and oneself critical reflection. The idea of a collaborative process in which we are all researchers, critical friends of one another, collective creators of texts, but despite this with room for singularity, for individuality... with no separation between the teachers and the students – we are all creating poems, we are all integrating our texts, we are all constructing the final products, accepting our role as joint authors. Almost everything is open-ended! At the end the emotions of the enthusiasm, the fear, the discomfort of feeling lost, of not knowing exactly how, where we are going, where we want to get to. (Ana Caetano’s diary, 19/11/2021).

For one of us, Ana Paz, the process was less clear. The idea was received with huge enthusiasm, but working on the text in the classroom, a cold silence black as night was felt... Would we be able to take the students on this poetic adventure? And Ana Paz reminded, with some trepidation, about another year in which the teachers proposed a free written text to the Art Education PhD class and as the students did not share their writing, the teachers decided to go ahead with their poems, creating a negative effect in the class.

We realized afterwards, in that year, that the class felt intimidated, and incapable of maintaining the literary level initiated by the teachers, although there were no expectations on our part, either in relation to the writing of poems (other prose was acceptable) or with the intention of appraising the artistic quality. We could not repeat the same mistake, especially as we became aware, as the academic year went on, of the same decorum and circumspection as regards sharing. However, in the lesson that began the project, all the students showed – with a degree of caution – enthusiasm towards the idea, mainly with a critical posture about what we could also add to the poem based on the artistic areas of each one and the collaborative dimension.

It became clear to us, as a group, that it would make no sense for the teachers to write the poem based on what the student said; instead we would all have to participate horizontally in this process.

In our case, we also intended to produce a collective poem that could be presented in subsequent years to new groups of PhD students and to other teachers of the course. It was an open process, constructed together with more moments of sharing the writings on our classes as collective feedback. The idea of a written poem was transformed on a video poem and the process of a found poem was changed by the creation of a generate poem, not in a simultaneous collaborative process but with the juxtaposition of individual stanzas, and with sequential moments of writing, reading, music composition, record of images and video post-production.

The real names of teachers and students are made explicit, assuming that they are all researchers of this project and not mere participants of the PHD, as accorded with all the members of the group.

3. Results

3.1. *Theoretical-conceptual Problems, in the first semester*

Given that the PhD in Art Education is geared towards the critical dimension, many of the theoretical texts proposed seek to jolt students out of their comfort zone, to enable vigilance (Atkinson, 2015) and rupture. The idea is always to denaturalize acquired certainties and propose strangeness in what is known, setting the student off on an adventure into the unknown. Varying effects have been caused by the readings, but in this academic year - once again - the essays of Ruben Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) and John Baldacchino (2015), disconcerted the class.

3.1.1. *From the rhetoric of effects to the rhetoric of cultural production*

Based on a comprehensive and in-depth review of the literature, Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) believed that, with important nuances - that helped one distinguish, for example, an “arts in education as cultural practice” approach from an “arts for arts” approach - all “the scholarly literature on the arts in education is filled primarily with advocacy statements” (p. 212). This unconditional and highly contradictory defence of the importance of the arts in education puts forward as its fundamental argument “what the arts do” and is situated in what the author considers to be an instrumentalizing capture of the arts, which he therefore labels the rhetoric of effects. Alternatively, the researcher proposes its replacement with a discourse centered on a rhetoric of “cultural production”, in which art “focuses on the conditions that shape experience rather than the outcomes” and it is nothing more than “something people do” (p. 226; italics in the original).

Based on the text by Gaztambide-Hernández (2013), we reflected on the topics of the rhetoric of the effects, the cultural rhetoric and the arts for the arts. The students created, in subgroups, conceptual charts that, when shared, led to a deepening of their reflection. Effected in different ways, they highlighted sentences from the text that pointed to the main ideas of the author, such as:

rather than thinking about the arts as doing something to people, we should think about artistic forms as something people do. This conceptual shift to cultural practice acknowledges that it is actual people, under real social circumstances, in particular cultural contexts, and within specific material and symbolic relations that have experiences involving symbolic materials and forms of cultural production. (p. 226).

The project of democratizing culture must be about opening up spaces of cultural production for democratic engagement as a process in which the very boundaries and limitations of every context are open to debate. Unlike the aims of cultural democracy, which tend to focus on issues of access to existing artistic practices and institutions, a cultural production approach is about the “democratization of culture” and about challenging existing institutional arrangements (p. 228).

Experiences with artistic forms cannot be guaranteed; even with the most carefully planned arts-based interventions, an experience cannot be predicted or planned or assumed to be good just because it involves something called “the arts”. The idea that the arts do anything presumes a guarantee, a guarantee that neither the practices nor the discourses of the arts can sustain. (p. 231).

The charts and their production, sharing and debate arise as places of meeting, listening, silence. In them we build bridges with the author’s ideas, but also raise questions, uneasiness, open movements. Based on the notes from our diaries, we record these movements among us and with the students:

To be surprised. We are surprised. We surprise ourselves. It certainly would have happened with me when presented with the two charts, so different in format, so creative in such different ways. One, transformed as an author’s book, done in partnership, with improvised background music created for the purpose and marking the rhythm of the visual appearance. The other, left open to multiple questions, concerns, open ends. How the author Gaztambide would have liked to see his text transformed! And that gives rise to the dialogue, questioning the thinking of the author, with no certainty that we fully understand it, seeking to read between the lines. Searching beyond the lines. What do we think? How does it dialogue with our experience?.

The question that gives me most concern and which remains is about what does art do and what do we do with it. In this search, I understand the disparity of positions that are not stable. At the end of the day, it is our discourses that need to be scrutinized, it is our options that have to be more conscious, without certainties about the best way forward, whereby every pathway includes a bit of another one. (...)

But I have a conviction that was in no way shaken: which is that the proposition ‘and’ is central in the search for a synthesis, even if ephemeral, always conditional, provisional, taking its own shape in different situations. And that, as in the yin and yang Taoist viewpoint, there is something in the other vision in each of one of us and the wheel keeps on turning, and therefore... (Ana Caetano’s diary, November 8, 2021).

As regards the issues raised by the author, the topic of art for art’s sake is also highlighted, where we question it in relation to the rhetoric of effects and the rhetoric of cultural production: should this idea of art for art be understood regardless of the effects it may have on intrinsic and extrinsic learning, but also the effect it can have as regards social transformation?

What relevance should be given to the process and to the product? Perhaps this is not the best metaphor for art education, but it is important to think about its implications when pondering on art education: does any education exist without purpose, without a start or an end? The ends may be open-ended, but they still exist, if only to develop critical reflection, symbolic creativity, among others. Arguments that arise and which makes us question things and rethink previous readings. The idea emerges that art will do something, beyond ourselves, without this invalidating the importance of being us who do something with it.

Without guarantees of previously established effects and much less effects that save us, even if something of us is salvaged and elevated, it will not necessarily make us happier, or better people, or a better society. Although it can help us in the search to do something with our lives and ourselves. We also cannot think that it is the only fundamental and priority part, and they all are/ can be, in conjunction, contributing together to our diversity and our specificity, for the development of individuals and collectives: "It is not just experience for experience, but what we learn with it, how we contribute to others with it, how we involved ourselves with it, how it liberates us or imprisons us, what we reflect on afterwards" (to be continued) (Ana Caetano's diary, November 8, 2021).

This is a reflection that may be transformed from art experience in education to research. For instance, the artist book and the piece of music created by the PhD students are processes of experiencing the author theory and of expanding our reflections. These are also processes of becoming researchers in arts education.

3.1.2. The shattering of Art Education in Art Education - Art + /- Education (lesson 12/11/2021)

Following the questions and learnings triggered by the previous proposal, the programme proceeded with reading and joint discussion of the text entitled "Education +/- Artistic", in which Baldacchino (2015) stresses the theoretical perspectives of art education based on the use of metaphors and a non-linear rationale. The fundamental argument of this article is that in Art Education there is no unambiguous discourse. Each of us speaks like a ventriloquist with a voice either of Education or Arts, based on a point of this irreconcilable tension.

Based on the reading of the text, we were touched by a range of ideas and each one brought this diversity to the debate. Some excerpts that we transcribe below exemplify the different statements crossing in our dialogue:

Talking, from front to back:

Language precedes independent discourse

The politician is the artistic agent of the ventriloquist, who is the teacher +/- artist and the artist +/- teacher

Learning is unlearning

Is the teacher ready for dialogue? Dialogue is difficult, am I prepared?

Leave the possibilities open... Conversing is the most important thing

Deconstruction, relations, immanence... open to possibilities, to experience

Art-education, room for chance, full of contradictions and doubts

Contingence, négociation, dialogue

We are educators and artists - what dialogues are we able to make?

Based on these and other statements, one of us wrote a poem, where each of the stanza was inspired on the ideas of each of the participants:

Listening
silence
soliloquies with spectator

overcoming loss in detail
seeking to go
wander in a circle
which at the end meets

the start makes sense

the joy and the wonder
of the encounter

the silence
listening

a map
with an itinerary
scenarios to visit
places of unrest
and discovery

drawing up bridges
in silence

to venture inside other
worlds that we inhabit
and not belong
truthfully not
with persona centered on
positions closed
to the other

are we prepared for dialogue?

are we able to unfold
conversing with ourselves?
or somewhere we
divided not noticing
the multiplicity we are

will we be puppets
of a discourse taken place before?

what place is ours
what movement in us
what freedom

to be
each possibility
and all? (Ana Caetano, November 12, 2021)

Based on the multiplicity of relations between art and education and on the awareness of the hierarchies that we build among them, depending on the positions we occupy, the stories we experience, the regimes of truth that condition our actions, the author invites us to be free to question all the possibilities, without impeding us from acting or making provisional syntheses.

Returning to our research question, about becoming researcher in arts education, it includes these dialogues with other researchers - colleagues and students - in the field and the awareness of conflicting points of view. In poetry, writing creation is an act of knowing and of becoming in conflict and dialogue.

3.1.3. *Art and spirituality (lessons 3/12/2022 and 21/1/2022)*

In the lessons of the Seminar we used the *International Handbook of Research in Arts Education* (Bresler, 2007), in which the PhD students would choose a section and one of the texts in that section to work on, proposing that we all read the prologue and participate in the presentation/organization.

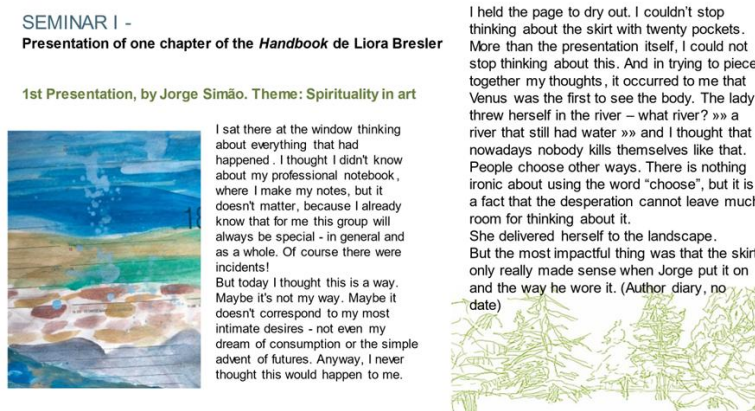
In the school year one of the sections most worked on was *Spirituality*, chosen by the students-researchers Jorge Simão and Janete Santos. In the text that Jorge Simão pondered on “the Spiritual in Art Education”, London (2007) and he showed the “almost complete absence of research, literature, and practice in spiritually grounded art education in North America, from kindergarten through higher education,” giving himself the challenge in the research of finding out the reasons for this absence. Paradoxically, London understood that “although spiritually grounded art education is all but absent from our public educational systems,” everything depends on how we do this research.

Using this as the starting point, the student looked to explore the idea of spirituality in his educational practice, as a teacher in inland Portugal, the Alentejo region, which is today completely deserted.

He brought us an installation with a black felt skirt, containing 24 pockets full of stones and gave a performance. He then explained that this piece was inspired on the life and death of an ancestor, in which the number of pockets represented the age of this woman who committed suicide in the river, just another of the many suicides that occur in this solitary region of the country and explain the verses of the traditional song: “I went to see you at the river, you were washing,” a metonymy for death. Experiencing and understanding this desolation can perhaps be a way to face spirituality in art education?

Figure 2

Presentation of one chapter of the Handbook de Liora Bresler



Source: Ana Paz Diary, December 5, 2023.

Three main questions emerged from the discussion: What is spirituality? How should it be worked on in educational contexts? How can you stimulate spirituality through art? In one of our diaries, we reflect on these questions:

What is spirituality? A process of relating and of awareness, which is much more than reflection and demands experience; a process of amplifying this experience, awareness and relationship with invisible dimensions; a process of connecting to the unknown; a process of alignment that connects us to these dimensions; a process of liberation. How to work in educational contexts? Stimulate and focus attention, and diminish the pressure of thinking and judgment are some of the ideas that occur to me. How to stimulate spirituality through art? Based on the experience we went through, it seems important to me to establish a clear intention in this sense; create an environment that is propitious, for example, with music that can calm our thinking; to suggest moving into a profound relationship/connection; maintaining the focus: attention on thinking, movement, sketching on paper, observing a plant, breathing; following the flow through creative process (Ana Caetano's diary, December 3, 2021).

To write down questions is fundamental in the inquiring spirit of a researcher and in the relationship with the participants of the research we are carrying out. Spirituality was chosen frequently by our students in different years. It remains a challenge to explore this issue in arts education research and to question how we are transformed as researchers and teachers, by doing it. These two different records point to the emphatic and reflexive relations of the researchers with the spiritual domain. Through art they enter in the experience of the spiritual. This is another facet of becoming researchers in art education - to live, to write and rewrite the experience.

3.1.4. Doing (Art) Education as Art (Education) (lesson 10/12/2022)

Following on from the discussions started by Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) and Baldacchino (2015), one of the presentations also focused on the dialogue relationship that comprises Art Education, choosing to do so - and for the first time - a text from another Handbook, in which Frederik Gunve presents "art and teaching" as inseparable practices," especially those that fixed on "temporary territories" where one "can blur and merge the zones and borders in and between art and education, and in the long run create new realms"

(Gunve, 2018, p. 237 and 239). He proposes that “by refusing dichotomies such as this OR that, the art-education and institutions can then take shape from – this AND that, we AND them, to embody the many and acknowledge the bastardization of everyday life, art and education” and that “by becoming something mixed up, strange and invasive to the defined institutional borders we can be part of and create necessary and life-giving differences that add to the complexity that is us (as part of everything)” (pp. 242-243).

Inspired by this mixture and contamination of non-binary practices, in which art and education intertwine intrinsically to create new zones of discomfort, Daniela Gonçalves proposes two exercises of visual creation. A first one, in which we hand out a rectangular paper with which we can cut at an angle, like a photograph. One of the teachers refers to the impact that this rectangle had on the construction of an everyday visual culture:

It stays with me. Whenever I get home, it's there. (...) It's as if I take it with me on the small adventures up to the Alto do Calvário, then going down to the wetlands and crossing the river. I never get to take it, but it's there. And for *this* here, forever. (Ana Paz's diary, February 11, 2022).

Subsequently, also deriving from this reading, Daniela Gonçalves sought an author who could clearly represent this idea of visual bastardization and infection of everyday practices, and she ended up focusing on the life and work of the Roman Catholic sister Corita Kent (1918-1986). The artist dedicated herself to pop art inside (and outside) the convent, establishing an aesthetic canon that materialized some of the discussions we were having during the lessons: is art what people do or is it the result of a genius? Based on her work, the student created an illustration workshop, in which we had to paint, with a range of materials, from felt-tip pens to watercolors to wax crayons, etc., having access to the canvas for only a few minutes, by choice of the student in order to respect time available.

At the end of these minutes, we had to change the canvas and work on a different canvas, and so on successively. This led to the creation of several illustrations using a mix of techniques like collaborative works. Although without explicit negotiation, as there was no dialogue during the conception, at the end we opened up a round table and clearly understood that everyone was attempting to respect what had already been put on the canvas, seeking to enrich and elaborate on what had been done earlier by colleagues.

As a result of this workshop, the classroom was suddenly transformed into a studio, and the center of our attention was no longer on the teacher in charge, but on the walls, where the pictures were hung. As a result of this incursion, it was possible to glean some methods from which our students could, themselves, within the scope of the PhD lesson, create some situations of professional development of themselves as teachers and as researchers. For us all, this was an art research experience, where we as participants can explore and recreate theory and practice.

3.2. Exploring research methodologies, in the second semester

In the second semester we made incursions into the methods selected by the PhD students for their theses, where we tested questions and investigative processes, in the form of dynamics with an artistic dimension. We will briefly present the work carried out around the (auto)biographical research and case studies, corresponding to the options made by two PhD students for each of them.

3.2.1. Case studies

Two PhD students opted to develop case studies and organize lessons focused on this methodology. Both organized participatory processes in which we could try out data collection processes, by observing the dynamics close to their study objects. We have decided to briefly present one of these experiences.

After presenting the text, Ricardo Gageiro proposed a performative task to carry out a participant observation, in which we would experiment a set of exercises and would have to write field notes on them afterwards, as figure 3 composition.

Figure 3

Records on performative dynamics about case study, conducted by Ricardo Gageiro

Dynamics about case study by Ricardo Gageiro

After this exercise I wrote a summary, which I sent him:

Two sentences, three words, 3 movements, 3 moments of stillness

Frequent repetition

Always stillness between the movements

All at the same time several times
One at a time, afterwards

At the end, collective applause
Afterwards, this writing...

Comment:


A process of self-observation and observing others, writing about the process – what was the goal of Ricardo doing this exercise? Was he a participant observer?

We participant-observers experimented the writing of our diaries. Here integrating descriptions and comments. One's own writing, accepting its subjectivity.


What difficulties this writing gave rise to, remembering the details after having noted down the narrated happening! I forgot the words, the gestures of the other, so focused on the organiser and on my own movement!

Being open-ended, without knowing the goal, this writing seemed beyond me (...)

(diary of Author 1, 5-5-2022)



Exercise: "Participatory Arts Based Research" by Deborah Esho



Source: Ana Paz and Ana Caetano.

For the other teacher-researcher who could not be present in the Case Study lessons, the poetic record allowed her to keep track more closely of what had happened, from the point of view of her colleague. Without necessarily seeking to report *what really happened*, given that such an exercise would never be more than a fiction or a perspective. This raises the question of the subjectivity of the arts based research, where the researcher-poet is creating a fieldwork note that can be used afterwards as a record for the group to reflect on participant observation and its difficulties.

3.2.2. Autobiographical research

In a lesson organized by the student-researcher Marta González about autobiographical studies, we were invited to watch a video she produced containing music, texts and animation she created. This introduction immediately led to introspection:

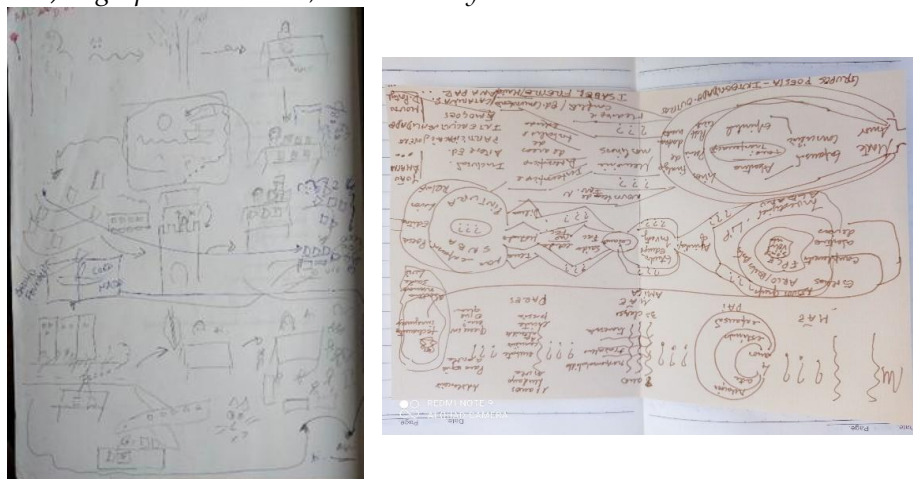
I'll wait. J'espère. Cello with lavender. The same challenging posture of Suggia, the Portuguese cello player, or Jaqueline des Près. These cello players also played with their life. In music: cyclical. Music that brings emotion, hope. A predisposition for what comes next (Ana Paz notebook, May 26, 2022, adapted).

The video was the trigger for her to present the interpretative reading of a research article about the visual autobiography (López-Ganet & Mesías-Lema, 2021),

under the pretext of cementing the differentiation between the life actually lived and the story told based on this raw material. Subsequently, she proposed us to make an autobiographical visual record and sharing it later to the group.

Figures 4 and 5

Exercise on (auto)biographical research, conducted by Marta Gonzalez "How can I draw my life?"



Source: Ana Paz and Ana Caetano.

In relation to the work done based on Marta's proposal, in which we were invited to think through drawing about our research from the starting point of our life history and the thread that links the course of time, I felt the need to move away from the idea of a single line and direction ... I found links to my research, also through the objects of study and methodologies: the option to study fragments of life, episodes, events (from the master's degree and now in the PhD); prioritizing the present in ethnographical processes, and transforming the present in participatory and research-action processes; the relevance of the arts in investigation from my PhD, which derives from my interest in working with poetry and painting...

A reflection that is being drawn and where we become aware of processes while we are drawing. (Ana Caetano's diary, May 5, 2022).

Other methodological options were worked on, like participatory arts-based research, autoethnographical studies, a/r/tography (coming together of art and graphy, or image and word. includes both visual and written processes and products of a research text). Inside, a broader orientation, we are incorporating diverse approaches in the research designs. We are bordering on hybrid methodological processes, seeking to understand distinctions and affinities. And always ending by landing on the singularity of each investigation and in the creative process that underpins the development of an investigation, clarifying the path as we travel along it. This is also one of the features of this task of ours in the collective project and it is also a learning process that we have been deepening as researchers into art education, integrating a multiplicity of processes and allowing the pathways to become clearer as we move forward.

4. Discussion - How are we becoming researchers in arts education?

The same question comes up again: How are we becoming researchers in art education?

How do I become a researcher? – If I have become one at all. It's a fight. ...

It's a constant fight, at the end of the day.

But just like it's a fight, in the right frame of mind, it's also part of the researcher's day to appear all over the place.

Community. I don't know if this is the right word. Without others doing research, it's not worth it. You need to have a certain obsession. (Ana Paz's DEA diary, April, 2022).

We start from our passions, but we get twisted up in them, blind to the interest this may provoke in others, to the fields of research we are immersed in, to ourselves and our blind spots. We find it difficult to come out of ourselves, to see ourselves. These difficulties are the matter to advance, so as to forge ahead and overcome ourselves and at the same time position ourselves as beings in the world. It is a difficult path, but one that we need to stay on, aware that it is always unfinished, imperfect; the awareness that therein also lies the beauty, the mystery of launching ourselves towards discovering our changeable place.

We learn to be investigators of ourselves and we feel we are delving into an adventure into the unknown, able to put ourselves under scrutiny first and foremost.

Also, within the context of the lessons, we were often challenged to think about the processes of becoming researchers and this focus on our project led our PhD students to propose moments of reflection, with the aid of artistic expressions, interconnected with our own methodological options. This was the case of Deborah Esho, who in a proposal about participatory research with arts, led us to think individually about our processes, while we created a 3D item, at the end of which we shared our productions and reflections.

In relation to Debbie's proposal, through a process of artistic creation we will reflect on our investigative process with arts, our questions and difficulties.

I focused on the process we are doing together, which began in an extremely open, fluid manner, without really knowing where we were going with it. When we started to structure it 'inside the box', which had a felt base we were given to work with, some difficulties and two-way options emerged. We opened several avenues, some of which are pathways that made us turn back and review our positions, but which always led us to open new ones.

(I also stress the discovery that I never think much out of the box, although at times I border on the edges, going to places I do not know).

Somewhere in time we found the core of the work, which had been there from the start, but which will lead us to an achievement that is still ongoing. Also interesting was the process of looking for connections between our processes. I remember Marcelo's question about a feeling of drowning, Renato's question about feeling disorganized, Ricardo's question and his brains, Ana's questions about concerns under an apparently calm surface, Deborah's queries. (Ana Caetano's diary, May 26, 2022).

In another lesson, Daniela Gonçalves' project, we reflected in a wider sense about what it is to be a researcher in arts education:

This makes me think about the questions worth dwelling on in the field of art education, the importance of understanding them without losing the contexts in which the regimes and discourses are constructed; the benchmark frameworks and the purposes that delimit these practices and the experiences being studied; the specificity and the contributions to enlarge the field, to deepen the debates, to throw light on the blind spots; the theoretical and scientific categories that can be structural in the problematizations, the search for common denominators for comparison, not for appraisal, but to understand processes and understand tensions, to organize devices-benchmark frameworks.... (Ana Caetano's diary, March 17, 2022).

We discover ourselves as researchers in art education in these encounters with artists-educators who think about and carry out research as they try out processes, taking risks, widening the road and finding themselves in it. We also discover ourselves in the fear of those who take steps in trepidation and question themselves while opening doors. Finding ourselves on this journey of thinking alongside them, showing uncertainty, the thirst to learn, the amazement of knowing so much and so little.

Each person will find something close to the answer to that question of becoming researcher – I would say, in my case and for now, through this attention to the dialogue, the silence, the movements of the body, the look that opens up (embodied and collaborative writing). Also, through this writing, which enlarges, that is not mere reporting, that reflects, that reconstructs, that reinvents, that projects... sometimes relating, sometimes merely reproducing, other times poetry, almost always subjective. But not only the poetry, it's the entire process, the whole creation is open, among the teachers and the students, a true and authentic search for ourselves (Ana Caetano's diary, December 19, 2021)

The writing had an extremely relevant role, but not only the writing. Moreover, the production and sharing of visual images, the incorporated and holistic experience, the whole process:

The writing participates in the exercise of embodiment and subjectivation. But with this PhD, I also try to empower the word in its sound, its image. And as such I modify and amplify the experience. An experience of embodiment but also of discomfort. The process is a spiral and is empowered by the peers – the other researchers (all of them). It is no longer just one being in a state of writing; it is being in a state of arts. (Notes on Notes, by Ana Paz, September 12, 2022)

Poetry in action is in the movement, is in the view that opens up and amplify the writing of the other, is in the environment that leads us to feel the joy in our body of being together and different, of approaching something that we do not know, of being closer to what desire and reason asks of us, although we do not know very well how to achieve it.

5. Conclusions - Final considerations

Going back to the questions that we put to ourselves from the outset, we would say, firstly, that we did not identify a single fixed mode in this researcher role, considering that our self-researcher is plural and dynamic, someone who makes discoveries in the classroom practice and in the research practice, whereby both practices are aspects of the same embodied process of becoming and of transformation. The specificity and complexity of the field of art education comprise permanent challenges that instigate the problematization of our positioning and the successive re-equating, in dialogue, with the authors and our students.

In this project in particular, the research process, based on practice and on the arts, is interwoven in the writing and in the discovery of new approaches, with a mutual contamination, almost a disconnection, based on the narrative and on the poetry. The epistemological and aesthetic dimensions reciprocally empower each other, leading us to an interconnectedness of multiple voices and silences, to deepen the collaborative dimension of conception and the achievement of this task.

Becoming researchers is, therefore, experiencing theory in practice, expanding knowing by arts creation and fruition, inventing and proposing research situations to reflect in and on action. Through collective processes of reflection and art making we learn together. By arts fruition we develop a reflexive relation with the subjects of art education. Through exploration in practice of methodological processes we reflect and learn about what we want and need to improve in research. Becoming an arts education researcher has been to explore new ways of doing, to assume vulnerability of the not-known before others, to take the risk and accept the adventure to travel with them in a path to be taken. Becoming is also the multiplicity of becoming, where pluralities, hybridities and singularities of and in each research project brings new facets to the multifaceted 'Id'entities' of the researchers-teachers-artists.

It is an open process, often experienced in discomfort, through the imponderability of the creative and participatory processes. It is an unfinished project, in search of the unknown, to be continued...

If two straight lines do not meet in space, do we ever truly converge? ... Will we be in a state of accompanied grace? (Ana Paz's diary, no date; adapted).

What we have in common are words, talking about our experiences. Words put together in sentences, where we store our dreams and our fears. In common, our teacher being and our artist being. In common, the uneasiness, the journey, a road to be forged. At the end of the day, the spell of an aesthetic sense that seduces us and the sensitive skin that vibrates with the passing of the wind. (Ana Caetano's diary, no date; adapted).

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