

# The «Eventualizing» of Arts Education

*Introduction by Catarina Silva Martins & Thomas S. Popkewitz (Editors)*

To write this editorial is a challenging task as it is the moment to think about the process through which this special issue emerged. As editors we invited a group of international scholars to contribute to this theme, but we knew from the beginning that the final object would be much more than an issue inscribed within a single disciplinary academic field. Most of the authors do not know each other, but they all share a common space of questioning and looking to social objects of schools as historical practices and effects that inscribe systems of reason. Knowing this, we totally ignored the final image. We took Michel Foucault's statement: «If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think that you would have the courage to write it? What is true for writing and for a love relationship is true also for life. The game is worthwhile insofar as we don't know what will be the end.» (Foucault, 1988, p. 9)

The idea of event in the title is taken as the possibility of thinking about arts education as something that is made up of historical and contingent layers. If we can play with the idea of social and educational research, art education is taken as an object to study its effects. As the origin of study, research seeks to understand how children learn it, how it serves social purposes, or how it comes into being as a school subject to provide for the changing needs and purposes of society, research objects we later talk about further. When we speak about «eventualizing» art education, we are reversing the questions of its study. It is to ask about the historical conditions that make art education as a school subject possible. What is taken for granted



and given metaphysical and essentialist ideas about the subject viewed, in contrast, as a monument. That monument is not merely there as a heroic act of the past but embodies a range of cultural, social and political principles that come together. The assemblage ‘acts’ to make possible a particular ‘seeing’, thinking, and act on through its representations and identities.

A simple analogy is possibly useful here. We can think of arts education like a recipe and the outcome. When we go to the bakery, we ‘see’ and think about the cake in the display case. It is an object that has an identity all on its own that triggers our imagination of taste and culinary joys. The cake becomes a determinate object—a metonym—something that is representable and has an identity whose effects we project (what would it taste like if we had a piece), and also calculable (we buy it and taste it to decide if it «works»). But the cake is produced from a number of ingredients that have different qualities, capabilities, and characteristics. When assembled and connected, those elements are no longer seen. The cake becomes an object with its own identity and productive of desire. Art education is like the cake, only not an intentional object given its determinacy but one that is historically produced through different events. To «eventualize» the recipe of art education is to make visible the different practices that make it possible to think about schooling, art, teachers, children and difference in people in the governing of the present.

Thus, «eventualizing» art education is to ask about it as an effect of historical practices and power relations—what Foucault spoke about as knowledge/power relations. The «eventualizing» also assumes differences, fissures, and multiple lines that compose what today is called art education. As such, this eventful space is used as the terrain of a history of the present. It is an event of today that is analyzed simultaneously by the emergence and by the regularities that are installed.

Our «eventualizing» in this volume is making a conversation that breaks conventions in thinking about arts education as an event that engages a broader and simultaneously focused theoretical discussion around problems that directly affect today’s arts education disciplinary field. Theoretical yet at the same time historical and ‘empirical’ through detailed attention to things of the world; an ‘act’ that itself has repercussions into the very tissues of contemporary thinking about method as distinct from theory; and the real as somehow a distinction field that separates and makes the material as in opposition rather than in relation to language and discourses.



The initial point was to construct an issue around the theme of critical, cultural and historical themes on arts education. It was an easy enough idea. One of us is in an arts school and the other likes visiting Portugal and artists. The idea of opening the title to 'arts education' was important as a way of decentering the more common analysis centered on the visual arts. The titling of this special issue 'Critical', 'Cultural' and 'Historical' was to engage in a counter narrative that creates an arena that challenges and scrutinizes presentist views of arts education and the studies of the school. A close look at cross Atlantic research done under the label 'arts education' is an enterprise that maintains assumptions about the curriculum and the arts that are not commonly questioned.

The presence of the arts in education, for example, embodies narratives of salvation about the hopes of the future and its promises of a more progressive and human society. The salvation narratives are given as empowering children and youth. The salvation narratives are also expressed in relation to political theories about the kinds of people to be actualized through the processes of education. In the United States prior to and after World War Two, for example, art education was to protect the political ideals of the democratic citizen. Art therapy was introduced, for example, to create the free expression, creativity and freedom thought necessary to prevent the fascism and authoritarianism rearing its head in Europe. The salvation themes of the arts in school are taken to govern, from within, the students. And that hope of creating particular kinds of people also provides narratives of redemption among those populations feared as dangers and dangerous to the desired future. Art education is given as a means to social equity through attending to poor or problematic families and contexts, the ones considered 'at risk' by their dissident behaviors, or those that are also classified with several medical labels, such as a therapeutic.

Another narrative of arts education is one of exceptionality. In a world that seems to stress rationality, science and the abstract relations of modernity, the arts are seen as a counter mode of being. It is to give visibility to the uniqueness of humanity that poetry, music, painting and literature emerge. The arts become a different and highly symbolic world that has to be shared as such by all and from which differences can be celebrated among different times and spaces.

A different salvation narrative perceives the effects of the arts on other academic subjects, or in students' general and social competences. Justified to



achieve better results in mathematics, reading or science, the arts are used as disciplinary instruments that will make the child more attentive, motivated and even performing better in tests. Art education is not about artistic competences but about the making of a certain kind of person and about achieving a desired future. This rhetoric is not only present in school but also within the so-called knowledge economy. The latter is framed in the rhetoric of entrepreneurship that is inseparable from creativity and innovativeness. Art becomes one of the most variable techniques of governing one's own conduct. The creative child is the future creative citizen and worker who will believe that his/her interiority and autonomy are the expression of his/her independence, his/her success or failure.

When the different salvation narratives are viewed historically, they highlight a number of trajectories of the modern school that are elided in studies of teaching, learning, curriculum and policy.

Firstly, schools are places where people are made. The founders of late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries' republics recognized this. Education was necessary to make the citizen whose moral dispositions, responsibilities, and obligations were different from those of being a subject of the monarchy. Pedagogy entailed political catechisms that (re)visioned heavenly themes of salvation in the afterlife as notions of human progress and the earthy pursuit of happiness and freedom.

Taken at a very simple and seemingly obvious level is why create the spaces of schooling for children if not to create particular kinds of people. The modern school is no different from the earlier church schools where children were taught to read the bible so they could learn how to be moral and faithful parishioners. The modern school maintains this concern with making people, with today's soul talked about as 'the mind' and the interiority as the product of culture.

It is easy to develop an historical amnesia as the languages of the arts education are about learning and human self-betterment that obscures schooling as a social and cultural practice. Again a simple exercise in reflection on the models of the school curriculum can help to provide a critical, cultural and historical mode of thinking about schooling. When looking at curriculum of schools, they are alchemies. That is, children in schools are not historians or musicians. To make these fields of knowledge into school subjects requires ways of transporting disciplinary and conservatory cultures and knowledge systems into pedagogical practices. Yet when examining the alchemic models of the



curriculum, the selection, organization and evaluation of the curriculum were in the emergence of the modern 20<sup>th</sup> century school by principles of educational psychologies—expressed through the Americans Dewey and Thorndike, the Swiss Claparède, the Belgium Delcroy, and the Portuguese Lima.

The alchemy of school subjects is to normalize and govern the student's conduct (Popkewitz, 2004). They had little interest in understanding art, science, mathematics or music as fields that produce knowledge. The central organizing principles embodied cultural theses about modes of living. The cultural theses were about the dispositions, sensitivities and awareness that linked individuality to collective belonging and the morality. Today, this is evident in the American standards movement. The standards of music education and mathematics education, at one level, seeming different modes of knowing and appreciating the world, have similar standards (Popkewitz & Gustafson, 2002). They are expressed through psychologies of education about the child's ability to make informed decisions or problem solving, developing communication skills, and recognizing and acting on responsibilities as a citizen. The standards of mathematics education are also organized by psychological research on learning. The psychologies are systems of governmentality, more so than with anything that current studies of arts education believe.

But this alchemy also entailed a comparative style of reason that excluded and abjected in efforts for social inclusion. The inscriptions of divisions separate the world in two non-balanced slices. One contains a particular population minority that has the capacity to produce the great works of art and the others that are the spectators of these great feats. In school, the child is faced with a gallery of great masters, those that are there to be admired. But there is distance that separates the child from the masters as the representatives of a totalizing knowledge and the space between them is an abyss. However, the child believes that he/she has to learn about the masters through moving from the simple to the complex, from the part to the whole, and through an ordered progress that decides whether the child is more or less capable or incapable. This gesture of schooling expresses the hope about the child who is a responsible agent of social life. That gesture also embodies fears about the child who is not responsible, lacks motivation, lacks creativity and inventiveness and thus differs from others.

Speaking about people in this manner has particular historical trajectories that make art possible as a category about people (the artist) and education as sets of distinctions and differentiations to order and classify its pedagogy.



The shaping of a gallery of notables, representing the top of the race and the nation, for example, was constructed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the site of eccentricity and abnormality. Today and under different designations it is present by the *topoi* of exceptionality and at the same time by the rarefaction of those that are able to produce artworks (Ó, Martins, & Paz, 2013). From this perspective, the genius as a technology of government, from a biopolitical perspective, allows for the definition and government of the normal citizen and the others who are outside and ‘different’ (Martins, 2014).

The double gestures entail a comparativeness that is not merely about art education but about schooling and the making of differences and divisions in kinds of people. The distinctions and classification that order children are often placed in a mixture of biological and psychological characteristics that are ‘natural’ to the child, such as the child’s potential, creativity, and inventiveness. Schools, as the narrative goes, are to nurture their inner qualities while recognizing that only some have the capabilities to embody. This entails the problem of artistic learning as an impossibility.

Our assumption in this special issue is that arts education can represent a field of resistance to power, but only if it pays attention to its own historicity in a critical way. This was our critical gesture of dislocation through deploying questions of political and historical nature in this issue. The volume wishes to open the space to more than the visual arts while focusing on the visual. It is to address the visual in a more heterogeneous way. It refers, therefore, to the visual arts as an object that is to be understood also as sensory vision and the visuals in research as a productive practice through ordering what is seen, thought and acted on. The discussions take the disciplinary field of arts education less as an institutional structure or as an origin to explain what people do or its changes. Rather the papers explore arts education as historical constructions that order what is known and ‘the self’ that have repercussions in the present. The latter, history as understanding the present, is not to think of the evolution of practices by tracing it from a single origin. It is to explore particular clusters of historical practices as they are assembled over time and understand how they leach into the present as the buzzword of creativity or the contemporary hot topic of artistic research.

This treating arts education as an event to understand the conditions that make it possible is exemplified in the idea of creativity. It is a word of current reforms that travel across continents to talk about how nations can become «knowledge societies» through making children become inventive and inno-



vative. It might even appear as merely something one has to «be» when in arts education. Since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, arts curriculum was to teach children to express their individuality, spontaneity and innovation. This creativity was both meant to free the child's soul and to create what today is called 'entrepreneurial'. But when examined historically, it is a word encased with different sets of distinctions and classifications that design kinds of children and relegate other as different—not creative, not innovative.

Focusing on Spanish music education, Antía Ben's article focuses on creativity as a phenomenon that configures the taken for granted issues about schooling as a site of making kinds of people. Often education is about learning, helping children become adults and productive members of society. This language of education is often put into psychological framing of learning theories or social-communication and activity psychologies. Yet when thought of as a historical phenomenon, schools change children into something that they would not be if they did not «live» there for 8-13 years. Creativity is a critical ingredient for the shaping of the child as the citizen of the future; from China's new primary educational reforms to European and North American notions of childhood and learning. While the word might be the same, it is important that such words be put into particular cultural practices to understand how its objects of reflection and action are assembled. Creativity is neither neutral nor a natural concept in thinking about the individual. Ben addresses the contingent and arbitrary side of creativity as a cultural construct attached to a particular set of ideas and values as it moves into Spain in the 1960s to «act» as a way of seeing music as a form of study and the child as the object to change. Borrowing on Michel Foucault's notion of what constitutes a regime of truth, the article examines Spanish discourses and the effects in pedagogical practices. This movement, inscribed in a history of the present, analyses the potential of the tensions that creativity embodies.

Ironically, the idea of creativity is often connected with the argument of art for art's sake in the historical discourse that seeks to defend the arts in the curriculum. Today this kind of argument is given renewed vigor, as many countries seem to want to emphasize STEM fields as the expense of humanities. Thanh Phùng and Lynn Fendler, however, provide a unique and historically important argument to consider how there coexists with its counterpart, the instrumentalization that moves into the very principles generated in the arts. The relation of the curriculum, the formation of the modern citizen, and contemporary discourses about preparing the child for a growing



industrialized world of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, or for today's workforce in the so-called knowledge-based economies, are just some of the questions that can be unfolded from their text. Thanh Phùng and Lynn Fendler take art for art's sake and instrumentalization as two sides, first, inscribing the notion of art for art's sake at the heart of DBAE curriculum, with the shift from a self-expression/creativity perspective to the idea of art as a kind of knowledge; to the question, through Jacques Rancière, of how DBAE's theoretical apparatus is founded upon inequality/equality and the extent to which it makes room for the redistribution of the sensible. Their conclusion draws on how the DBAE taken for granted hierarchies reproduce spaces of inequality, through an instrumental meaning of art for art's sake. They introduce the idea of an aesthetic regime inscribed as art puts in crisis the representative order of art within education.

The historical realm of arts education in Brazil is explored through Rita Bredariolli's presentation of four acts. For those familiar with the historical making of schooling, the relationship between the sciences of education and psychology is not new. The educational and social psychologies are inventions that aim to govern those that supposedly they are just describing. The idea of a natural tendency of the child to draw, and the correspondent belief that when devoted to artistic activities the child is expressing his/her interiority, is just one example on how psychology acted in the world making its constructions coincide with the natural. The study of artistic development in the child was part of children studies in Europe by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. And by the middle of the century, the official language of arts education curriculum propagated the language of modern art: natural, expressive, spontaneous, and colorful. Those were given as some of the characteristics of both children's art and the child (Martins, 2013). In Brazil, it was not much different. Bredariolli's study is interested in how the concept of free-expression was driven by psycho-pedagogical studies and the interest of artists, critics and educators in the making of a certain kind of child. The acts are to analyze the association between art, education and freedom. The analysis of children's graphic expression became thus not only the best example for picturing this freedom but also the spot of interest of several studies in the comparison established among these and 'primitive' art or 'crazy' people.

The issue of instrumentalization, but now explored through the idea of transaction, is questioned in John Baldachinno's text. Where Ben, Fendler





and Bredariolli focus on the historical and political/philosophical principles that order art education, Baldachinno's goal is to ask about what we speak of as art education and its pedagogical location through its hermeneutics. The formula Art ± Education is presented in four scenarios in which the force that appears is the making sense of art as the accident. The entanglement of art and education is not *per se* the guarantee of a critical opening of possibilities. Together or separately what remains to be analyzed are the expectations held by those who see this relationship as a necessary practice and which kind of alchemies produce art in education. The reduction of their dimensions to measured values becomes paradoxically the site of resistance for both the artist and the educator. Artists ± Educators is the final formula in Baldachinno's proposal. It is to rethink the historical and present relationship of art and education as a critical form to how we imagine each one's roles within these relationships. It matters, therefore, how we imagine what learning in the arts is because there is a risk that rather than speak to everyone and no one, we create formulas on how we speak to each other.

The making of the observer through visual technologies is a fact of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that authors such as Jonathan Crary (2000) deeply studied. This making was shaped through the capacity of 'paying attention', which implied the disengagement from a myriad of attractions. His interest lays in how a subjective vision was dependent upon the incorporation of vision within the materiality of the body. In doing this, and stating that subjective vision was more dependent on the body rather than in external stimuli, vision is transformed into a field under exploration and open to normalization, quantification and governing. At the same time, the shaping of the scientific self was part of this same device of visibility. As Daston and Galison (2010) claim, the making of a scientific image is the making of a scientific self and part of objectivity's historicity, but also of the history of subjectivity. It is in the sensory and perceptual vision and in the making of objective perceptions that Karin Priem's text is situated. Priem pursues further the school alchemy in which psychology becomes the translator and principles through which art is made into an educational subject. The author explores this interest by examining child development studies formed with photography as a mode of 'objective' display. Focused on the materiality of things and facts, the photographic techniques became a tool to foster new ways of seeing within the domain of education, new ways of producing and presenting science, new ways of producing spectators, and a mode of organizing the objects of social change.



Not only photography, but also drawing, were some of the techniques used to represent a world that science wants to make objective and transparent, thus, open to intervention. What *Ebony Flowers* develops in her visual essay is an association of teaching and learning, but taking the challenging exercise of undoing this relation through the form of a comic. Her comic essay describes two images of the body—affected and unaffected—circulating in curriculum reform efforts, trying to analyze how body discourses and the idea of drawing align with a common-sense logic of formal schooling. In its format this visual way of presenting research is relatively new in academic journals. A very recent and popular case is Nick Sousanis' thesis «Unflattening», in which the author tries to discuss visual thinking in teaching and learning through the use of comics. Only a question of form or, perhaps more than that, the idea is to push the limits of what seems (im)possible to do in academia.

In terms of its 'eventful' space, *Ebony's* visual text is inscribed within the ambiguous space of arts based and artistic research, which is the question of Catarina Almeida's paper. Historically inscribing the emergence of artistic research field, her study tries to recover the questions of the marriage of the arts with the academic world. Within this institutionalization, however, remains an always repeated state of artistic research as excusing itself of further explanations. In a way, artistic research discourses inscribe the state of exceptionality of the world of art itself and even if within a world with different protocols from the arts world, and being there, the refusal appear as its 'natural' being. Locating artistic research in the field of higher arts education, Almeida takes artistic research as an object of inquiry, acknowledging these forces and power relations that are responsible for giving us the perception of events and the shape reality. These forces are not seen as autonomous and essential things with inner significance, but as the result of the action of these power relations.

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**Received:** June 6, 2015

**Final version received:** November 16, 2015

**Published online:** December 2, 2015

