
LIVRO VERDE
DA EDUCAÇÃO
DE INFÂNCIA

TÍTULO
Livro Verde da Educação de Infância

ORGANIZAÇÃO

Ana Luísa Ferreira
Escola Superior de Educação de Paula Frassinetti
Ana Pinheiro
Escola Superior de Educação de Paula Frassinetti
CIPAF – Centro de Investigação Paula Frassinetti
INED – Centro de Investigação e Inovação em Educação ESE-IPP
OFEI - Observatório para o Futuro da Educação de Infância
Brigite Silva
Escola Superior de Educação de Paula Frassinetti
CIPAF – Centro de Investigação Paula Frassinetti
CeiED - Centro de Estudos Interdisciplinares em Educação e Desenvolvimento
OFEI - Observatório para o Futuro da Educação de Infância
Daniela Gonçalves
Escola Superior de Educação de Paula Frassinetti
CIPAF – Centro de Investigação Paula Frassinetti
CIDTFF – Centro de Investigação em Didática e Tecnologia na Formação de Formadores
OFEI - Observatório para o Futuro da Educação de Infância
Elvira Sanchez
Asociación Mundial de Educadores Infantiles (AMEI-WAECE)
Florbela Samagaio
Escola Superior de Educação de Paula Frassinetti
CIPAF – Centro de Investigação Paula Frassinetti
Instituto de Sociologia da Universidade do Porto
Paula Pequito
Escola Superior de Educação de Paula Frassinetti
CIPAF – Centro de Investigação Paula Frassinetti
OFEI - Observatório para o Futuro da Educação de Infância

DESIGN GRÁFICO E PAGINAÇÃO
Daniela Costa
Escola Superior de Educação de Paula Frassinetti

EDITOR
OFEI/ESEPF

LOCAL DE EDIÇÃO
Porto | Pode fazer download desta publicação aqui

DATA
2024

ISBN
978-989-35284-6-4

LIVRO VERDE DA EDUCAÇÃO DE INFÂNCIA

PAULA FRASSINETTI
Escola Superior de Educação

OBSERVATÓRIO
PARA O FUTURO DA EDUCAÇÃO DE INFÂNCIA

AMEI-WAECE
www.waece.org

ÍNDICE

In education for critical and performative understanding of visual culture, knowing how to generate questions is as or more important than finding answers. It is effectively didactics of questioning, and the answers will be the driving force guiding collective construction work projects. (…) In fact, we adults, when we think about the teachers who have marked us most throughout our school careers, always remember those who, as John Dewey said, helped us to think, more than those who told us (in fact, forced, under sanctions) what to think.

Leonardo Charréu

School of Education/ Polytechnic Institute of Lisbon.
Center for Research and Studies in Fine Arts (CIEBA)
Interdisciplinary Center for Educational Studies (CIED)

Towards a qualitatively different childhood: Rethinking the objectives of children visual art education.

Leonardo Charréu | School of Education/ Polytechnic Institute of Lisbon, Center for Research and Studies in Fine Arts (CIEBA), Interdisciplinary Center for Educational Studies (CIED)

INTRODUCTION

What does the bankruptcy of a major multinational toy store have to do with the existence of a qualitatively different childhood from those who used to play in the streets, squares, and gardens until very recently? Perhaps it has a lot to do with it. The lack of demand for playable games (hands on) and a variety of three-dimensional toys in favour of digital-based electronic devices, such as smartphones and tablets, may have partly dictated the crisis experienced, rapidly losing a significant portion of the children's toy market from ages 5 to 14. If we were to ask any child in this age group today what they want for their birthday or as a Christmas gift, the answer is invariably the same: a smartphone. Preferably a top-of-the-line one.

The iconic toy store Toys "R" Us, founded in 1948, which once had 1700 stores worldwide, and which just a year earlier had generated an astronomical gross revenue of 9.59 billion euros, declared bankruptcy in 2017. It seems to be gearing up for a comeback, but almost certainly with profound changes in its sales strategy, considering that childhood and its playful needs, influenced by an extremely powerful and seductive media and digital culture, are experiencing profound changes in the ways of playing and being a child in contemporary times.

Economically, there is an entire market of products and services geared towards it, with their own brands, ranging from clothing to a variety of products (including cosmetics and beauty) that were unthinkable just a few years ago. Gyms and sports clubs, extracurricular tutoring centers, private courses of all kinds, are frequented (sometimes with waiting lists) by a multitude of children whose parents want them to be natural competitors to face a world where supposedly only the strongest will succeed.

We know that childhood is increasingly assuming greater importance in social life. It is also true that

there is a disparity in its presence between urban and rural worlds, which are significantly different. Its rarity is observed in the interior of Portugal, a country marked by an inexorable demographic disaster that is announced and already felt. In the interior, and faced with unresolved socio-economic asymmetries, "not all children have childhoods," as Portuguese writer Gonçalo Tavares says in the preface of a book by Professor Carlos Neto (2020), who also argues that (perhaps affecting urban childhood more):

> Because adults don't allow them to play, and play freely, our children are becoming clueless, true motor illiterates. Prevented from moving freely in nature and in open spaces, in contact with fresh air and natural elements, with no place for imagination and creativity, today's children are increasingly crippled by glaring motor illiteracy (p.17).

And, in truth, it is gesture and motor activity that form the basis of all artistic activity, regardless of the artistic expression we may be considering.

THE (ADULT) CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF CHILDHOOD

We know from studies in Anthropology and Cultural History (Ariès, 1987) that not all childhood is considered within Western age and cultural parameters. Unfortunately, in many regions of the world, childhood becomes laborious as early as 10 years old, and even before that age, thus missing an important stage of human development that should prepare them for the demanding pre-adolescent and adolescent phase – also Western "inventions."

However, it is the inexorable media world we currently live in that leads us to create new representations of childhood, particularly those based on images from fashion magazines (Hernández, 2012), but also in other media products such as animation, video games, and the all-powerful cinema. Since children themselves do not appear on fashion magazine covers or as actors in films, but are instead instrumentalized by adults, we can say that "childhood is a cultural construction that largely acts as a projection of adults' fantasies and desires (...) what has certainly changed is the adults' view of their idealized constructions of childhood" (Hernández, 2012, p.195).

These idealized representations of childhood are part of a modern civilizational project, designed by the Enlightenment thinkers of the late 18th century, where a new citizen would supposedly emerge. And it will be the alliance between the triad formed by the family, the school, and the state that will be the driving force for this utopian new man to become possible (Hernández, 2012).

The authentic chamber of horrors that constituted the two world wars that occurred in the 20th century showed that this utopia, that of the emergence of this new man, was unattainable but, as a utopia, it at least makes us aware of our (manifest) imperfections as social beings who have not yet adopted a cooperative stance instead of a competitive one, in the way we relate to others, as suggested by Maria

Montessori at the beginning of this century, which turned out to be deadly and somewhat apocalyptic. The school, and what is done in it, then assumes a centrality in the philosophical discourse of the 20th century, as emphasized by the much-cited passage from Hannah Arendt (2011), herself one of the most cited philosophers of that century:

> Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to take responsibility for it and, with such a gesture, save it from the ruin that would be inevitable were it not for the renewal and coming of the new and the young. Education is also where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and abandon them (p. 247).

It is then education, this Foucaultian apparatus, simultaneously of power and control, but also a place of support and social commitment, a framework of possibilities and renewal of hope that a better world will be possible and within our reach. This implies considering the school space as a kind of expanded field (a term now also widely used in the field of public art). According to Neto (2020):

> we should broaden our understanding of the school space, considering that the free spaces and public or private facilities (outside the school walls) of the city can constitute educational territories. Extending the reach of the school to the community allows us to identify a multitude of knowledge that can become part of the educational project of each educational institution, from the perspective of a learning community (knowing and participating in experiences with artists, gardeners, cooks, bakers, police officers, etc.) (p.159).

On the other hand, this childhood benefiting from this open school is made up of flesh-and-blood children who, as Arendt states, we must unconditionally love. It may tend towards abstraction if we only focus on the academic discourses that can be generated from it – childhood –, but it is undeniable that “childhood is not only a social construction, its representations and the imaginaries they construct have a discursive effect. These mutations configure new strategies of colonization of childhood” (Canella & Viruru, 2004, cited by Hernández, 2012, p.195) as we see how a good part of these discourses – especially those generated from excessively directive pedagogies - set aside children as creditors of autonomy, often disregarding them as political subjects (with effective rights), a condition reserved only for adulthood.

Here we understand the concept of discourse as the set of “strategies and devices that fix how we should think and see certain aspects of reality in a naturalized way” (Hernández, 2012, p.205). To some extent, what matters then is, through critical artistic education, to generate a kind of counter-discourse regarding the official discourse that allows seeing and analyzing other “non-naturalized” versions of reality. It is, in essence, to attempt dissent in order to experiment with knowing other versions of reality. We consider visual artistic education (obviously not all, not even in competition with other artistic expressions, but in complementarity) as the possibility to access, develop, and

experiment with the arts as symbolic-cultural devices with the potential to reach these advanced levels of understanding the complex and multifaceted world we live in.
When we consider a "colonization" of childhood, we are referring to a metaphor based on the belief that the primary goal of education would be to fill a child with civilizational knowledge, as if we were dealing with a considered empty, virgin, and available terrain, with the perspective that we can freely construct an idea of a student and, later, of a citizen, in line with a political design that has already predefined what the good citizen should be. However, this can lead to the stifling of the so-called "vital aesthetic attitude" of childhood (Larrosa, 2022) and to the expulsion of children from the naive materiality of their own projects, as Arendt warns us (2011), causing us to miss the opportunity to access new and unforeseen things, as only children can provide. But also, to be prevented from generating – the children themselves - a critical discourse, parallel to their material, plastic, and artistic activities, situated within their intellectual possibilities, which continuously rethinks the world as an unfinished field of possibilities, always in becoming.

> The praise of childhood as an "aesthetic and vital attitude" can be considered suspicious, as Larrosa warns (2002, p. 121), if we live in an era marked by massive infantilization apparatuses of individuals and systematic production of forgetting. After all, what do we forget, what do we leave behind? What do artists so eagerly seek in the idealized "original purity" of childhood? Signs of fatigue, wear and tear, and dulled creativity lead artists to the sought-after sparkles of childhood? And what place would there be for the aesthetic experience of childhood in education (Loponte, 2008, p.114).

These relevant reflections and questions from Luciana Loponte point towards a kind of feedback loop of contemporary art in the inexhaustible pure (?) childhood imagination. The trajectory of numerous modernist artists (Klee, Picasso, Miró...) is a testament to this view of childhood as a place of rescue, an opportunity to soar above the extraordinary expressiveness of children's plastic production towards a profound renewal of visual poetics at risk of stagnation.

A CHILDREN'S ART EDUCATION FOR THE CONTROVERSIAL AND ALIENATING TIMES OF THE ICONOSPHERE.

The idea that a relationship between contemporary art and art education, in each historical context, seems inevitable appears to be widely accepted. For many reasons, among which one stands out: many art educators come from Art Schools where contact with the dominant premises of contemporary art ultimately shapes their beliefs and pedagogical practices. If there are characteristics that could, broadly speaking, define today's art, they would be *discontinuity* and *unpredictability* leading to "ruptures of space and time, questioning of truths, imbalance, the new, the unexpected.

Contemporary art is made of the eruption of events" (Loponte, 2008, p.116).
At the same time, we are currently immersed in the so-called iconosphere, a term coined in 1959 by filmmaker Cohen-Seat based on film studies. According to Roman Gubern:

> We can easily consider the iconosphere as a complex system in the sense that this term is used in the physical sciences: a system that encompasses many interrelated variables, whose behavior is unpredictable or extremely difficult to reproduce. Another basic principle is that the iconosphere has a biological bias: images compete with each other in the social space to attract attention and catch the public's eye (Gubern, 2013, p. 32).

Art is then inserted into a vast iconographic ecosystem where its mechanical reproducibility, stripping it of the "aura" that traditional aesthetics bestowed upon it, as Walter Benjamin argued (1987) in the early 20th century, now places it on par with other image productions that circumscribe the vast world of so-called visual culture. Consequently, many mainstream artists today do not conceive their artistic projects without paying attention to important components of *circulation*, which essentially allows them to reach a much broader global audience than artists of the past ever achieved, and of *reproducibility*, which affects the market relationship of the artistic artifact, which, in many cases, now depends more on reproduction rights than on the material value of the work itself.
On the other hand, many artists already produce hybrid artistic projects in connection with other more popular visual languages (advertising, animation, comics, music videos, etc.) and other technologies. Undoubtedly, as Bruce Ferguson argues (2009), we belong to a generation immersed in information and entertainment massively conveyed through images. From Instagram to Facebook, YouTube, Google, and podcasts, we now live within digital social networks, and smartphones are now cyborgian extensions of our bodies and, at the same time, effective devices of mass distraction. Not only have they already entered, but they have also become consolidated in the routines of adults and children alike. We also live within the ephemeral and the superficial:

> "Two million spams are sent every second, which means one hundred and seventy-one billion irrelevant messages per day. If there were any possible glimmer of hope in this chaos and confusion, I would say that light is the fact that the world is ironically becoming less text-based, less word-based" (Ferguson, 2009, p.32).

So, the media, particularly those of electronic-digital nature, are now at the center of the new definition of literacy to the point where some filmmakers dare to assert that in the contemporary world, those who cannot "read" images are illiterate. For Walter Benjamin (1987, p. 115), seemingly inspired by the famous Bauhaus teacher Noholy-Nagy, "the illiterate of the future will not be those who cannot write, but those who cannot photograph."

In the face of the inexorable rise of the image, in its various vectors, whether static or dynamic, analog or digital, the mission of some institutions (public libraries) and multinational digital companies to digitize much of the world's books does not fail to seem futile, responding thus to the utopian desire of the 18th-century encyclopedists; however, as Ferguson (2009, p.32) states, they continue to believe, perhaps mistakenly, that the world will continue to read.
However, one of the most valid premises in visual culture studies alerts us to the fact that there are no innocent images, or very few are:

> images do not fall from the sky, but are produced in inter-actional, historical, institutional, and discursive contexts, among others. This leads me to conclude that the stories images convey and the visual narratives they are part of are, in essence, social artifacts that tell us stories about society and culture, as well as about an individual and a group (Hernández, 2012, p.196).

In this way, images – especially those projected with very specific purposes beforehand - can affect and interfere in social life, for better or for worse. They also have a mirroring effect (sometimes, a magnifying glass), helping us to see others and ourselves from what is reflected by the images and how they impact us:

> images are part of discourses while constituting discourses: ways to fix reality and see us as we see ourselves, to fix reality and see ourselves and others. In that sense, they are themselves a praxis that goes beyond mere representation and from which we appreciate their effects on the bodies that are represented and on those who look, recognize themselves, or desire themselves in those representations (Hernández, 2012, p.197).

So we see the importance of working with images of the world in children's art education (and indeed, in art education for all age groups), although typically the emphasis is placed on technical, stylistic, or formal aspects of a practice that still predominates in the art educational practices of teachers and educators. But from a broader educational perspective, not exclusively aimed at "teaching art for art's sake," or teaching art that will diligently decorate school spaces:

> what interests us is the ability of the arts and visual culture to become catalysts for the personal transformation of their users, whether as producers or recipients. Their educational potential lies in their capacity for condensation and precursors of human experience, in their ability to generate and promote processes of personal enrichment that do not necessarily have to be replicas of those from which they arise, as is the case in school and museum practices (Aguirre, 2011, p.166-167).

Eisner (2008, p.15) also emphasizes this important experiential dimension underscored by Imanol Aguirre, considering that “the arts are a special form of experience.” But this experience goes far beyond the disciplinary knowledge of artistic currents and the work of reference artists in Art History. For Eisner, “the sense of vitality and the explosion of emotions we feel when moved by one of the arts can also be ensured in the ideas we explore with children, in the challenges we encounter in conducting critical inquiries, and in the desire to learn that we stimulate” (Eisner, 2008, p.15).
Clearly, this is a philosophy of art education that we advocate, centered on the importance of lived experience, on the development of the learner, and not on the result or product that is achieved. And it is in this detail that all the difference lies between an art education “for art’s sake” (the utopian desire of many art educators) and an art education “through art” and visual culture, for future citizens of the world, which would be our endpoint or our main objective.

AN ART EDUCATION BASED ON VISUAL CULTURE THAT EMPOWERS THE CHILD AND FACILITATES QUESTIONING

The idea that art education can and should be related to other disciplines has entered common educational discourse at various age levels. Interdisciplinarity has become such a worn-out term in pedagogical discourse that for many educators, it has lost its meaning. However, “generally, neither art schools nor universities actually encourage such cross-pollinations, or interdisciplinary work, except at the rhetorical level” (Ferguson, 2009, p.34). Teachers’ comfort zones come from their knowledge of their own disciplines, which they have always taught, usually in the same way. And anything that involves crossing boundaries or trying something new tends to distress a profession that has become accustomed to working with rigid and predefined lesson plans. They expect the expected, not the unexpected. In fact, teachers and educators are trained in this rigid model of planning, which any subsequent final training report will have to legitimize. Compliance with the curriculum is favoured over the possibility of the creative transgression that the arts offer.
So the words of Carlos Neto (2020) become pertinent, according to whom:

> It is necessary to think about the school and its functioning differently, breaking with the idea of forced, routine institutionalization, and obtaining the necessary consensus for a pedagogical reinvention more attuned to the needs of children, considering the new and uncertain world that is approaching. This future will require an open, democratic, and participatory school regarding the singularities and diversities of its users, who need to be released from protected spaces and become closer actors to the real life of the community (p.159).

This way of looking at the contemporary education of our children signals them as agents of change, co-authors, and co-responsible for their own educational process, as demonstrated by the relevant experiences of “Reggio Emilia” and the “Escola da Ponte”. Not considering children as passive

agents in their learning but as indispensable actors in the educational act is also to move them away from a position of “colonized” and, thus, to allow opening a path to include children as researchers of the meaning of the representations that show them how they should be seen and how they should see themselves, but also to explore how individual construction relates to the social construction of childhood (Hernández, 2012, p.205).

Authors such as Maria Acaso (2010), Fernando Hernández (2003), Kerry Freedman (2003), or Raimundo Martins & Irene Tourinho (2015), among many others, have emphasized an idea of art education based on visual culture that places, at the same level, and as symbolic materials of global humanity, all cultural and artistic productions, without the ocular-centric and euro-centric hierarchies legitimized by rigid school disciplines, such as Art History, Theory, Art Criticism, and Aesthetics, among others. They all have in common the tendency to look more to the past than to the present, shaping what should be learned and known. By crossing high culture and so-called low culture (in the sense of everyday culture), they seek to find something that allows for an experience that intersects or is close to the daily lives of children. The important thing is that these visual products have the potential to generate comprehensive critical discourse and narratives. Therefore, in education for critical and performative understanding of visual culture, knowing how to generate questions is as or more important than finding answers. It is effectively didactics of questioning, and the answers will be the driving force guiding collective construction work projects. So, we could start by asking children, as suggested by Hernández, (2012, p.204-205):

Why do you think I brought these images?
What can we do with them?
What stories could they tell?
What if we put our faces instead of the people in them?
What do these images say about us?
Where do they place us?
Do you agree with the childhood reflected in this image?

The idea is to deconstruct with the children the hegemonic narratives that some authority has defined as the key to knowledge, the standard interpretation, or the closed, definitive answer to a specific question, work of art, or image. It is then, as proposed by Eisner (2008, p.15), to ensure that what we teach or experimentally live with children can “continue to pursue them voluntarily after all the artificial incentives of our schools are forgotten” throughout life.

In fact, we adults, when we think about the teachers who have marked us most throughout our school careers, always remember those who, as John Dewey said, helped us *to think*, more than those who told us (in fact, forced, under sanctions) *what to think*. This does not imply, of course, abandoning practical experiments in art education, nor considering each child a philosopher, a politician, or a sociologist in miniature to be privileged. What seems evident to us is that we are facing a technocratic and digitized childhood, more informed, which is no longer the same as the one

that consumed routine and conductive artistic education practices without protesting, where plastic and artistic expression rarely ventured out of the spider's web that considered it a therapeutic art pastime, rather than considering it another way of understanding the extraordinary complexity of the human cultural adventure unfolding on our planet, our common home.

References

Acaso, M. (2010). *La educación artística no son manualidades: Nuevas prácticas de la enseñanza de las artes y la cultura visual* (2ª Ed.). Catarata.

Aguirre, I. (2012). Hacia una nueva narrativa sobre los usos del arte en la escuela infantil *Instrumento, Revista de Pesquisa e Estudos em Educação*, 14(2), 195-207.

Arendt, H. (2011). *A Crise na Educação. In: Entre o Passado e o Futuro*. São Paulo: Perspectiva.

Ariès, P. (1987) *El Niño y la vida familiar en el Antiguo Régimen*. Madrid: Taurus.

Eisner, E. (2008). O que pode a educação aprender das artes sobre a prática da educação? *Currículo sem Fronteiras*, 8, (2), 5-17.

Benjamin, W. (1987). Pequena História da Fotografia. In Benjamin, W. *Obras Escolhidas: Magia e técnica, arte e política: Ensaios sobre literatura e história da cultura, vol I.* Brasiliense.

Ferguson, B. (2009). Arte e Educação. In Camnitzer, L. & Pérez-Barreiro, G. (Orgs.) *Arte para a educação / educação para a arte*. (pp.29-40). Fundação da Bienal do Mercosul.

Freedman, K. (2003). *Teaching Visual Culture: Curriculum, aesthetics and the social life of art.* Teachers College Press.

Gubern, R. (2013) "La iconosfera y los nuevos médios de comunicación mecanográficos" In Mercader, Antoni & Suárez, Rafael (Eds.) (2013). *Puntos de Encuentro en la Iconosfera: interacciones en el audiovisual.* (pp. 31-42). Publications e Editions de la Universitat de Barcelona.

Hernández, F. (2003). *Educación y cultura visual* (2ª Ed.). Octaedro.

Hernández, F. (2012). la cultura visual como estrategia que posibilita aprender a partir de estabelecer relaciones. *Instrumento, Revista de Pesquisa e Estudos em Educação*, 14(2), 195-207.

Larrosa, J. (2002). *Nietzsche e educação*. Autêntica.

Loponte, L. (2008). Arte e metáforas contemporâneas para pensar infância e educação. *Revista Brasileira de Educação*, 13 (37), 112-188.

Martins, R. & Tourinho, I (2015). *Educação da cultura visual*. Editora Ufsm.

Neto, C. (2020). *Libertem as crianças: a urgência de brincar e ser ativo.* Contraponto.

PAULA **FRASSINETTI**
Escola Superior de Educação