Intercultural Education Strategies

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MEDIA, ART AND DESIGN. INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION STRATEGIES

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OUTCOMES OF THE INTERDISCIPLINARY ROUND TABLE HELD AT THE 4TH INTERNATIONAL TICASS CONFERENCE

Rosita Deluigi

This section of the report summarises the reflections that emerged during the round table on "Educational Recommendations for Implementation of Integral Theory of Visual Education", held at the 4th International TICASS Conference (P.Art. icipA©tion: Education, Visual Languages and Intercultural Strategies" 28th–29th of November 2019, University of Macerata, Italy).

The conference explored the contemporary relationship between education and visual communication in contexts that emphasise intercultural strategies and promote active citizenship. The use of diversified languages and media broadens the scope of interdisciplinary domains and channels of dialogue provided there is effective accessibility (physical and cultural) to the different fashion of visual-artistic communication.

The guidelines developed by the Faro Convention (2005) on cultural heritage preservation were a starting point to rethinking and conceptualising the relationship with visual communication, in participatory and intercultural ways. Going beyond the European borders, as indicated by the Faro Convention, means to:

> recognise that rights relating to cultural heritage are inherent in the right to participate in cultural life, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; recognise individual and collective responsibility toward cultural heritage; emphasise that the conservation of cultural heritage and its sustainable use have human development and quality of life as their goal; take the necessary steps to apply the provisions of this Convention concerning: the role of cultural heritage in the construction of a peaceful and democratic society, and in the processes of sustainable development and the promotion of cultural diversity; greater synergy of competencies among all the public, institutional and private actors concerned. (Article 1)

The conference focused on the investigation of visual languages as strategies for producing new messages and narratives that might favour the interaction of both different identities and tangible and intangible heritage.

In this respect, the Faro Convention Action Plan argues that when heritage is considered as a source and resource, everyone's opinions, interests, and aspirations do matter (Council of Europe 2018). In this regard, it is extremely important to:

> encourage reflection on the ethics and methods of presentation of the cultural heritage, as well as respect for diversity of interpretations; establish processes for conciliation to deal equitably with situations where contradictory values are placed on the same cultural heritage by different communities; develop knowledge of cultural heritage as a resource to facilitate peaceful coexistence by promoting trust and mutual understanding with a view to resolution and prevention of conflicts; integrate these approaches into all aspects of lifelong education and training. (Article 7, Faro Convention)

All convenors discussed visual communication, art, and cultural heritage as transcultural dimensions from an educational perspective. Further, they investigated how to promote processes of social participation in order to create spaces of interpretation, fruition, and artistic production. It was also important to explore how to design intercultural strategies for interaction through different languages and highlight the connection between visual language and storytelling (from memory to future projects). The space of debate covered the relationship between education and visual communication from the perspective of lifelong learning, and examined the link between education, memory, and visual communication from a historical perspective.

The last session of the conference hosted a round table in which the attendees discussed key points concerning education methodologies on art knowledge and visual languages. The round table involved 32 participants: academics, professionals, researchers, and students from several institutions:

- University of Macerata – Italy
- Academy of Art in Szczecin – Poland
- Stowarzyszenie Edukacja, Nauka, Kultura – Poland
- University of Jan Evangelista Purkyně in Ústí nad Labem – Czech Republic
- Polish University Abroad in London – United Kingdom
- Universidad de Estremadura – Spain
- Pwani University – Kenya

The main research fields were:

- human rights, intercultural studies, philosophy of culture;
- art education, media pedagogy, philosophy of education, psychology of education, critical pedagogy, social science;
- teacher training, instructional technology;
- art history and iconology, archaeology and cultural heritage, history of religion;
- visual and digital literacy, transcultural aesthetic, cultural and visual anthropology;
- art curators and cultural management;
- music and fine arts, literature, and cinema.

The presence of many participants with different cultural and disciplinary backgrounds generated a fruitful dialogue. In addition, the interactive methodology allowed discussion participation by participating.

After a short presentation, the attendees were divided into five small groups (6–7 members) to discuss the opportunities and challenges in participatory dynamics to encourage creative and collaborative processes (Brame & Biel 2015; Bransford, Brown & Cocking 1999; Davidson & Major 2014; Gokhale 1995; Johnson, Johnson & Smith 2006).

The working groups met for 45 minutes and afterwards shared their inputs in a plenary session, opening the debate and providing guidelines and recommendations on the use of visual languages in education through participative approaches.

The outcomes of the round table are summarised in the table below; they can be combined with the educational recommendations (chapter 5) and with the framework of the best practices (chapter 8).

Relevant issues	Guidelines, recommendations
1. Multidisciplinary approach	• Knowledge is based on networking and open dialogue among several approaches, methods, understandings, and experiences.
2. Intercultural relations	• Interactions among differences can be an opportunity rather than a challenge through intercultural dialogue. • Participation is a fruitful method in education to share content among different cultures. • The relevance of plurality and the *métissage* can support the process of decolonising images in order to read the reach behind them. • Responsibility is also conveyed by the conscious use of visual languages as a communication media.
3. Online information	• Pay attention to the responsibility and effects of sharing visual information on public spaces online (Internet, social networks, and open sources). • Learning skills and new digital language competences in order to "not get lost in the Internet".
4. Visual language is like a bridge in education	• Visual language can be considered a valid educational tool. • Creativity and self-improvement are also supported by the critical use of images. Visual language supports the process of creative thinking (subjective and collective) and encourages the growth of free people toward an empathic society. • Visual language needs visual literacy because incoherent interpretations might appear and the tacit reality will be ignored. It is important to focus on the process of reading a visual image and have an actual knowledge of visual codes. • Through participation, it is possible to achieve shared strategies for problem solving in order to overcome competitive-centred communities toward equality and conflict mediation. • It is important to take into consideration the educational paradigms of lifelong learning and cooperative learning.

5. Collaboration and social impact	• Collaboration is the result of joint effort, especially when the aim is to involve important stakeholders to deal with problems in society. • Through a cooperative approach and using visual communication, awareness of the global situation can be improved, especially social challenges (nationalism, racism…), in an effective way.
6. Student/recipient involvement	Promoting student involvement through visual language can help them be active in the experiences. They can remember activities and learning aims for longer because engagement in memorable-actionable experiences is more interesting. Taking part in an educational-visual activity can generate collective and individual memories and identities. Using local materials and valuing personal attitudes and professional competences are ways to create intercultural dialogue and promote common understanding. Visual language allows the participation only of sighted people, and we must take persons with special needs into consideration by developing inclusive settings (using different expressive languages). It is important to develop training paths for teachers, educators, and curators to improve a creative approach to new media, starting from several perceptions of visual images (first of all, teacher/curator and viewer perspectives).
7. Visual images and new narratives	Visual languages allow the creation of new representations of oneself, of otherness, and of contexts. On the one hand, visual messages (icons, symbols, colors…) can be used to express contents and implement universal meanings in order to harmonise a transcultural understanding. On the other hand, plural images, representations, and narratives help to overcome homologation.

Fig. 1–3. Round table – work in progress (Macerata, Italy, 2019)

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