



INERT EXPERIENCE IN THE VISUAL ARTS: CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE CHILEAN CURRICULUM*

Antonio Silva** 

Patricia Raquimán*** 

Miguel Zamorano****

* This article is part of the research project “Decolonizing the Territory: In Search of Life Stories and Visual Logs of Practicing Teachers in the Teaching of Visual Arts (2018-2019),” funded by DIUMCE, Metropolitan University of Educational Sciences.

** Doctoral candidate in Philosophy focusing on Aesthetics and Art Theory at the Universidad de Chile. Master of Philosophy in Education from The University of Sydney, Australia. Scholar at the Department of Art at Universidad Alberto Hurtado. antonio_silva_chile@yahoo.com

*** Doctor in Education Sciences from the Pontifical Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and Docteur dans Sciences de l’Education from the Université de Rouen, France. Full time professor at the Department of Visual Arts at the Universidad Metropolitana de Ciencias de la Educación. praquima@uc.cl

**** Doctor in Philosophy focusing on Aesthetics and Art Theory from the Universidad de Chile and Master in Critical History of Art and Architecture from the Universidad Mayor. Full-time professor at the Department of Visual Arts at the Universidad Metropolitana de Ciencias de la Educación. miguel.zamorano@umce.cl

Abstract

This research article discusses the challenges posed by the Chilean Visual Arts curriculum while it resigns to the teacher's role as a curriculum maker. Thus, the prescribed curriculum is dismantled and confronted with the curricular theory. For this review, the disciplinary contents and didactic orientations of a learning unit focused on engraving are analyzed, identifying the absence of networks of concepts articulated with interpretive frameworks. In addition, Dewey's (1973) principles of "continuity" and "interaction" are retrieved, through which the inert relationship between one's own world and their cultural environment is verified. To tackle this conception, which according to the authors' judgment weakens the area, is proposed an orientation guided by a critical didactics that allows expanding the individual experience towards social and cultural interactions that recognize the co-determination of students in their educational processes. Consequently, a decolonial approach is proposed, based on recent theories and discussions, to deploy a critical and well-founded didactics that allows a curricular appropriation in order to mediate and activate the creative and transforming potential of visual arts education.

Keywords: Visual Arts curriculum; educational reform; curricular theory; critical-constructive didactic; critical theory; decoloniality thought

Experiência inerte nas artes visuais: revisão crítica do currículo chileno

Resumo

Este artigo de pesquisa discute os desafios colocados pelo currículo de Artes Visuais no Chile, enquanto renunciam ao papel do professor como criador de currículo. Dessa maneira, o currículo prescrito é desmontado e confrontado com a teoria do currículo. Para isso, são analisados os conteúdos disciplinares e as orientações didáticas de uma unidade de aprendizagem orientada à gravar, identificando a ausência de redes de conceitos articulados com marcos interpretativos. Além disso, os princípios de "continuidade" e "interação" de Dewey (1973) são recuperados, através dos quais é verificada a relação inerte entre o próprio mundo e o ambiente cultural. Para confrontar essa concepção, que na opinião dos autores enfraquece a área, propõe-se uma orientação guiada por uma didática crítica que permita expandir a experiência individual em direção a interações sociais e culturais que reconheçam a co-determinação dos alunos em seus processos educacionais. Consequentemente, propõe-se uma abordagem decolonial, baseada em teorias e discussões recentes, para implantar uma didática crítica e bem fundamentada que permita uma apropriação curricular para mediar e ativar o potencial criativo e transformador das artes visuais.

Palavras-chave: currículo de artes visuais; reforma educacional; teoria curricular; didática crítica; teoria crítica; pensamento decolonial





Experiencia inerte de las artes visuales: revisión crítica al currículum chileno

Resumen

En este artículo de investigación se discuten los desafíos que plantean las Bases Curriculares de Artes Visuales en Chile, en tanto renuncian al rol del profesor como hacedor del currículum. De esta manera, el currículum prescrito es desmontado y confrontado con la teoría curricular. Para esto se analizan los contenidos disciplinares y orientaciones didácticas de una unidad de aprendizaje orientada al grabado identificándose ausencia de redes de conceptos articulados con marcos interpretativos. Complementariamente, se recuperan los principios de “continuidad” e “interacción” de Dewey (1973), mediante los que se constata la relación inerte entre mundo propio y entorno cultural. Para enfrentar esta concepción, que a juicio de los autores debilita el área, se propone una orientación guiada por una didáctica crítica que permita expandir la experiencia individual hacia interacciones sociales y culturales que reconozcan la codeterminación de los estudiantes en sus procesos educativos. Consecuentemente, se propone un enfoque decolonial, sustentado en teorías y discusiones recientes, para desplegar una didáctica crítica y fundamentada que habilite una apropiación curricular con miras a mediar y activar el potencial creador y transformador de la educación de las artes visuales.

Palabras clave: Currículum de Artes Visuales; reforma educacional; teoría curricular; didáctica crítica; pensamiento decolonial

Preliminary Approach

[...] The individual that needs to be educated is social, and society is an organic union of individuals. If we remove the social factor from the child, we are left with only an abstraction; if we remove the individual factor from society, we are left with nothing but an inert and lifeless mass.

JOHN DEWEY (1973).

As it is well known, the curriculum serves various functions: it reflects the principle of social control (Bernstein, 1971), as well as the structures of the knowledge field where power and hegemony relationships are determined (Connell, 1985). These, in turn, serve as a framework for selecting the content of school subjects (Goodson, 1983). Therefore, reflecting on the art education curriculum encourages understanding the educational action in the context in which this phenomenon occurs. However, before passing judgment on the contingent phenomenon, one must ask: What worldview does the Chilean Visual Arts curriculum adhere to, and what purposes does it fulfill? The analysis of the educational purposes of the curriculum leads to the conclusion that these continuous and, at times, discreet curricular design strategies constitute a decision guided by an interest in regulating social order, disarticulating the task of art education from its context, and deactivating any criticality of the experience. This, in turn, renders art education socially innocuous.

In the discussion on the implications of the new Visual Arts Curriculum Guidelines in Chile for the field and its stakeholders, as examined in this article, there is evidence of resignation regarding the role of the teacher as the curriculum maker (Clandinin and Connelly, 1992). Little attention has been given to the curricular reform in Visual Arts in Chile, to the extent that almost no theoretical-critical analysis is dedicated to it¹. For this reason, this article attempts to be an initial approach and calls for a discussion of the issues raised. In this sense, it examines the underlying premises of the simplification of the content in these programs, which, according to the authors, inevitably leads to an impoverishment of both the syntactic and substantive disciplinary foundation (Schwab, 1964, 1973) and the liberating action of dialogical encounters (Freire, 2005) between teachers and students.

While the purpose of this article is not to explain the causes of the annulment of reflective thinking and doing in visual arts education, it is plausible to argue that these causes align with an instrumental determination of this field of knowledge, understanding it as a “service provided to consumers,” as Pinar (2014, p. 8) notes. Consequently, what these Curriculum Guidelines would present is a response to the desire for immediacy (of teachers) and gratification of its recipient (students); a matter that some authors designate as characteristic of advanced capitalism (Jameson, 1991).

1 Luisa Miranda and Marcelo Espinoza (2015), in their review of the Chilean Visual Arts curriculum, focus on key milestones that have shaped its development from 1813 to 2015, emphasizing the presence of foreign models. When describing the curriculum foundations, they argue that there is a dichotomous view in its axes, “understanding the teaching of visual arts in two main blocks: one purely artistic and the other linked to visual culture” (p. 24); however, this approach, rather than analyzing the articulation of conceptual content frameworks, does so to assert that the foundation of the curriculum has a “view of artistic education that is extremely elitist” (p. 26). According to the authors, this perspective is rooted in the liberalization of education (a process initiated in 1990 with the return to democracy), which, in their opinion, has led to “a sector of society being able to access proper artistic education [...] [while] other sectors are faced, as in the nineteenth century, with content poverty” (p. 26). Dora Águila (2018) has written an article on the National Arts in Education Plan (2015-2018), in which the authors of this writing were part of the Evaluation Panel for said Plan; however, the mentioned text does not delve into the Visual Arts curriculum but rather presents the action lines of this program as a complement to the reform. For a review of this, refer to Águila (2018).



Aspects to Consider from the Curricular Reform of Visual Arts 2012-2019

In the Chilean context of recent decades, two curriculum reform processes have taken place: the first, between 1997 and 2003 (Cox, 2006); the second, from 2012 to the present, with the last stage still in development. Before continuing with the curricular analysis and its consequences in the implementation and pedagogical decision-making of teachers, some political and organizational background is presented to contextualize the institutional framework under which these curriculum changes have occurred. After the return to democracy in Chile in 1990, there was a two-decade period of governments led by the Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia, during which the curriculum foundations were established. These are defined as a guiding principle using a basal instrument prescribing the minimum learning for each educational level. To do so, plans and study programs for all courses were formulated for gradual implementation between 1997 and 2003. Subsequently, in 2006, in a context of high mobilization and social upheaval, where thousands of students demanded improvement in the quality of public education, the government and the political party system agreed to reform the Constitutional Organic Law of Education (LOCE² in Spanish). With this, the current General Education Law (LGE in Spanish), derived from the Presidential Advisory Council on Education recommendations, was published. Since its approval in 2009, the LGE has regulated education in Chile, enabling the establishment of Curriculum Guidelines³ for each knowledge area.

2 With this, the ominous burden of having come into effect just hours before the civilian-military dictatorship of Pinochet handed over power is assumed.

3 The Curriculum Bases of the 2012-2019 reform replaced the set of mandatory objectives and minimum contents of the 1999-2003 reform. For more information, you can visit the website <https://www.cned.cl/marco-curricular-y-bases-curriculares>

In 2012, during the first government of President Sebastián Piñera, supported by the Alliance for Chile, the curricular change in Visual Arts was approved, and programs from 1st to 6th grade were developed. Then, intermittently, in 2016, the programs for 7th and 8th grade, as well as those for 1st and 2nd year of high school⁴ were approved. After three years of rejection and observations made by the National Council of Education (CNED) to the Curriculum Guidelines of all subjects corresponding to the 3rd and 4th year of high school, these were approved while this article was being written by the authors. Also, among these recent changes, the non-obligatory nature of art education in the last two years of general education was decreed⁵.

According to the Curriculum Guidelines, the previous categories of the curriculum, such as fundamental objectives (FO) and minimum mandatory content (MMC), are replaced under the rationale that this new structure seeks “a concept in line with the need to more closely link the formulation of learning with its monitoring and evaluation” (Mineduc, 2015, p. 17). Thus, under the formula of learning objectives (LO), “the purposes and achievements of the process are defined, and it establishes what will be the performances of the student that will allow verifying the achievement of learning” (Mineduc, 2013, p. 13).

A first analysis of the current Curriculum Guidelines from 1st grade to 2nd year of high school reveals that, in the case of Visual Arts, the latest reform changes its perspective on constitutive contents of the area, eliminating its disciplinary contents⁶. Now, what consequences does this measure entail? This is reflected in the fact that the contents are not explicitly stated as a body of knowledge but are subsumed under LO. In other words, conceptual contents are displaced in favor of the determined installation of procedures. While organizing

around LO is not a problem per se—at least not in all subjects⁷—the following statement guiding curricular decisions deserves the attention of the authors: “This way of formulating a curriculum also contributes to ensuring the quality of teaching, as it is easily understandable for teachers and does not lend itself to different interpretations” (Mineduc, 2015, p. 17).

This formulation establishes two reasons that are discussed below. The first refers to the ideology that permeates the construction of this curriculum; the second to a conception of knowledge that ignores the epistemic quality of visual arts education. The supposed clarity, what the curricular text designates as easily understandable, seeks to guide the procedural work of teaching, specifying the skill to be developed. However, to simplify the understanding of the contents, the mentioned operationalization reduces pedagogical action to a merely technical dimension confined to the production of a product. In this process, as will be examined below, disciplinary contents are dispensed with, understood as networks of concepts articulated with interpretative frameworks and specific procedures central to the subject areas. It is not a minor issue that public policy asserts that education specialists require the subject to be easily understandable.

In examining this approach, it seems that public policy implicitly assumes that those teaching the subject have not been trained to do so⁸. How, then, can this curricular simplification be understood if not as a rejection of complex training and critical teaching of visual arts? In the view of authors, this decision to make the curriculum an easy-to-apply instrument is highly problematic, as it does not conceive the teacher as an agent capable of appropriating and interpreting the curriculum.

4 Within the study programs developed in recent years, Visual Arts has, until today, an implementation that covers the entire primary education (1st to 6th grade) and the first four years of secondary education (7th and 8th grade, 1st and 2nd year of High School).

5 The approved proposal disaggregates the differentiated training in Art into six specialized subjects (CNED, 2019): Visual Arts, Audiovisual and Multimedia; Creation and Musical Composition; Interpretation and Creation in Dance; Design and Architecture; Musical Interpretation; and Interpretation and Creation in Theater.

6 Although it is not the purpose of this article to compare the current curriculum with the previous one, it is worth noting that the previous curriculum was organized around objectives and contents. Thus, each program was structured around thematic units, organized in concepts that involved processes and artistic productions linked to the contexts of works and/or students. It explicitly proposed an interrelation between theory and practice. For a more detailed understanding of the previous curriculum for Visual Arts in Chile, refer to: Errázuriz (2004).

7 It is worth mentioning that this article specifically refers to the disappearance of content in the Visual Arts subject and not to the curriculum in general.

8 It should be noted at this point that the current educational reform has not been accompanied by a national policy to support the improvement of the quality of training for in-service teachers. In contrast to the previous educational reform, which was supported by a systematic set of programs such as Educational Improvement Projects (MECE in Spanish), P-900, the Montegrande Project, teacher training programs, internships, etc. For more detailed information, refer to Gysling (2003). For more information on teacher training in Chile, check Cox, Meckes, and Bascopé (2010). Also, to delve deeper into teacher training in Chile, it is suggested to consult Ávalos (2014).

The second statement guiding the curriculum states that it “does not lend itself to different interpretations” (Mineduc, 2015, p. 17), a particularly problematic judgment for the arts and also for the humanities. This assertion is based on the belief that the body of knowledge of an academic discipline would be unified and should not allow differences in interpretation. From the perspective of visual arts, this notion is not only absurd and erroneous but also ignores, on the one hand, the academic discussion about its disciplinary content (Efland, 2004; Koroscic, 1996; Short, 1995; Silva, 2015). On the other hand, it leads to nullifying the critical and qualitatively distinguishing potential of visual arts compared to other knowledge areas (Barbosa, 1998; Efland, Freedman, and Stuhr, 2003).

Consequently, the focus of the Curriculum Guidelines establishes that “a more detailed definition is sought and operationalizes it in a more explicit progression for each level” (Mineduc, 2013, p. 14). Expressed in this way, an emphasis is proposed to reinforce the presence of a measurable, objectifiable, and standardizable concept of knowledge, to the point that it will hardly promote what is intrinsic to art: curiosity, imagination, and creativity. This is because the rationale of this type of curricular ideology, as explained by Eisner (2002, p. 55), “seeks convergence on what is known rather than the exploration of the unknown”.

So, it is worth asking what ideas underlie a formulation that proposes eliminating concepts and contents that are feasible to interpretable. What role is expected of teachers in the face of a curriculum with these characteristics? In light of the research and theory accumulated in art education, it is difficult to sustain that the teaching and learning process can be conducted without considering the experience of how individuals perceive and interpret the world. Eisner (1988, p. ix) argues that in a context governed by a technical curriculum approach, there will hardly be space for experience because it is “difficult to operationalize. Furthermore, the effort has been towards standardization” (p. ix) and insofar as experience is idiosyncratic, meaning individual, it has no place.

In summary, the rationality of a technical curriculum approach, such as the one being examined, aspires to the certainties of its results and the asepsis of deliberations; therefore, implicit bureaucratic positivism, dressed in efficiency, embodies qualities that are neither neutral nor disinterested. Sancho (1990, p. 63) precisely explains the economic and productive conception of this vision:

Emitter of a descriptive, informative, reproductive, and instructive language, as a model of reality referred to the political context and symbolic power. Arranged in efficacy, efficiency, and control, its rationality is teaching, school objectives, technical sequences, and normative methods. Its meaning is to form human capital and develop capacities for economic progress, with the purpose of occupying various jobs required by the economic system.

So, the question arises about what happens now in the classroom once the centrality of conceptual content has been displaced and replaced by learning outcomes encompassing skills and activities. Firstly, the approach reorders the Visual Arts curriculum by determining other purposes for teaching and learning. As seen below, three axes are established that do not integrate the active power of experience but, rather, nullify it. Experience is a way of knowing the world and, therefore holds an irreplaceable value in learning.

The deficiency of the curriculum lies not in promoting the exclusion of experience but in conceiving it as a result of manual work, in the case of axis 1 (Express and create visually), and as a spontaneous response to art, in the case of axis 2 (Appreciate and respond).

According to Dewey¹⁰, experiential learning is based on two principles: continuity and interaction. Continuity (experiential continuum) refers to life as a continuum of experiences, modifying the relationship with the world; something is gathered from previously experienced situations that affect the experiences to come. Consequently, interaction acts internally and externally; that is, it operates by shaping one's own experience while affecting the external environment. This interrelation between one's world and the cultural environment is not bidirectional but the result of exchanges (transactions) between an individual and their social and cultural surroundings. Therefore, in light of the principles of continuity and interaction, the exchange between the student and their context, and vice versa, makes them consciously aware of belonging to a (inter)cultural framework of encounter and exchange.

In summary, the interaction of one's own experience does not occur in the current Visual Arts curriculum, as all internal actions do not permeate external circumstances. The execution of a technical procedure does not interact with the continuum of social experiences; visual forms and expressions do not resonate with aesthetic problems or cultural themes from the history of art or circumstances of language in the semiotics of the image but rather an inert response, an isolated individual experience, confined to a procedure, and a spontaneous response without the articulation of networks of concepts or interpretative frameworks proposing an informed and articulated didactic in coherent conceptual frameworks. This, according to the authors, as educators of Visual Arts teachers, results in an epistemic weakening that leaves the area as a nonspecific zone of the necessary disciplinary content to distinguish between components of the area, as well as uncritical in its ability to provide space for reflective thinking towards itself and its environment.

Analysis of the Curricular Proposal from the Disciplinary Perspective

Next, the *Io Medio* program is examined with the purpose of illustrating the addressed issues. This program contains four thematic units (Engraving and Artist's Book; Architecture; Mural Painting and Urban Design; Digital Art), of which the first one will be examined: Engraving and Artist's Book. This unit, in turn, prescribes five learning outcomes (LO), three related to engraving and two to the artist's book, of which only those referring to the engraving field will be analyzed.

10 In his book *The School and Society* published in 1915, he presents the foundations of the personal experience of students in learning, which he would later crown with *Art as Experience* twenty years later.



As mentioned earlier, the subject of visual arts is structured around three axes present at all levels. These axes, as shown in Table 1, are: Express and create visually; Appreciate and respond to art, and Disseminate and communicate (Mineduc, 2015, p. 318). In sequential order in Table 1, it is detailed that LO 2 and 3 refer to the axis Express and create visually, LO 4 and 5 to the axis Appreciate and respond, and LO 6 to the axis Disseminate and communicate. When examining the proposal, the emphases and guidelines provided for planning, implementing, and evaluating learning in the Engraving section reveal in each learning outcome that the unit lacks a central idea that explains or establishes relationships between disciplinary components and didactic orientations. In the absence of the disciplinary aspect, it is observed that there is no articulation linking conceptual, procedural, and cognitive aspects; that is, those aspects that refer to conceptual complexity. Additionally, the evaluation suggestions generally focus on procedures, detached from the purposes of conceptual learning sought to be achieved.

Table 1. *Learning Objectives of the Engraving and Artist's Book Unit*

LO 2	Create visual works and projects based on personal imaginaries, exploring the use of sustainable materials in engraving and mural painting procedures.
LO 3	Create visual projects based on personal imaginaries, exploring contemporary media such as artist's books and digital art.
LO 4	Make critical judgments of visual manifestations, considering the contextual conditions of the creator and using relevant aesthetic criteria.
LO 5	Make critical judgments of personal visual works and projects, as well as those of peers, grounded in context, materiality, visual language, and expressive purpose criteria.
LO 6	Design proposals for disseminating artworks and projects to the school and local community, either directly or virtually, taking into account the visual manifestations to be exhibited, space, setup, audience, and contributions to the community, among other factors.

Source: Visual Arts Program 10th Grade (Mineduc, 2015).

In Table 2, the evaluation indicators proposed by Mineduc, which aim to be addressed through engraving, can be observed. After examining the foundations and the program, it is noted that there are no guidelines regarding the substantive and syntactic conceptual structure (Schwab, 1964) of engraving: What is the importance of engraving? What are the substantive conceptualizations and relevant issues for the subject students should learn? In what way is engraving, as a language and technique for creating and communicating images, approached, contextualized, and adapted to the school environment? And even more, to what extent do these components, which structure learning of its technical and communicative aspects as a system of images, connect with the cultural environments close to the students? These questions undoubtedly refer to the declared or underlying intentions of possible strategies to be used by teachers, in which the actions that each group of students will take to lead to specific learning are implicitly implied.

Table 2. *Learning Objectives and Evaluation Indicators for Engraving*

Learning objectives	Suggested evaluation indicators lo
LO 2 Create visual works and projects based on personal imaginaries, investigating the use of sustainable materials in engraving and mural painting procedures. Suggested Evaluation Indicators for OA	Actively seek new ways to work with engraving procedures through artistic research.
	Express personal imaginaries through sketches for engravings.
	Create original engravings applying the most innovative results from artistic research with procedures.
	Differentiate between various materials for engravings, considering sustainability in the environment.
LO 5 Critically assess personal and peers' visual works and projects based on context, materiality, visual language, and expressive purpose criteria.	Evaluate the results of artistic research on procedures about their relevance for creating engravings.
	Assess proposals and ideas for engravings, considering creativity and the relationship between expressive purpose, materiality, and visual language.
	Argue critical judgments of personal engravings and those of peers regarding the relationship between expressive purpose, the use of procedures, and visual language.
	Communicate appreciation and critical judgments respectfully.
LO 6 Design proposals for disseminating artworks and projects to the school and local community, either directly or virtually, considering the visual manifestations to be exhibited, space, assembly, the audience, and contributions to the community, among other factors.	Select from their works those they wish to disseminate to the educational community.
	Use relevant strategies to disseminate their works to the educational community directly or on the internet.

Source: Visual Arts Program I° Medio (Mineduc, 2015).

The first thing that draws attention is that the curriculum proposal does not provide a context or guidance that gives clues about the relevance of engraving, nor does it mention the role that engraving has played for centuries in favoring and multiplying the circulation of images. What can be identified in this curriculum organization is the absence of an awareness in the individual's world of being in a social and cultural environment. As Freire (2005, p. 19) explains, "consciences are not found in the void of themselves, because consciousness is always, radically, a consciousness of the world."

At this point, examining the substantive conceptualization of engraving is necessary. Woodcut, the technique proposed by the study program in its ecological version (green engraving), for many centuries, allowed images of various kinds to circulate in a more accessible way, reaching a much wider audience. Later, with the development of the printing press and the diversification of engraving techniques in metal and lithography, engraving allowed artists to create images in various formats and reproduce them. Returning to the substantive omissions of engraving, there is an ignorance of the importance of engraving as a medium and language for developing posters in design, advertising posters, and the circulation of printed images for mass media well into the 19th century and throughout the 20th century.

In summary, none of the central aspects of engraving are mentioned in the unit; on the contrary, the notion provided is merely instrumental, confined to a procedure and a spontaneous response disconnected from the history of art and the plural value of images in visual culture.

In this line of thought, what has been examined so far refers to omissions and deficiencies in the Appreciate and Respond axis, and one must wonder what thinking skills are referred to as critical judgment. It is noted in LO 5 that when there is a reference to making critical judgments, it is stated that it seeks to be “related to context, materiality, visual language, and expressive purpose.” This statement, seemingly auspicious, considering the critical analysis deployed so far, is inconsistent with the evaluation indicators (see the right column of Table 2), where procedures, expressive purpose, and visual language prevail. Furthermore, materiality appears only in one criterion, while context is omitted.

In summary, the disciplinary substance is weakened throughout the program because links with the different knowledge bases that support the reflection of visual arts (art history, aesthetics, iconology, semiotics, visual culture, etc.) are not explicitly stated. On the contrary, the activities are directed solely towards a personal experience dissociated from the social, cultural, and material context, in addition to stimulating the spontaneous responses of students.

From a didactic point of view, linking content to the personal experience of a student presents an invaluable learning situation because it allows the promotion of other aspects of human development; however, by presenting engraving merely from a practical-instrumental aspect, its relevance as knowledge is lost since there is no continuity or interaction (Dewey, 1967) of individual experience with the external reality. These two principles absent in this curriculum would channel the spontaneous response, that initial and unfounded response as the Visual Arts program proposes, towards observation, then to knowledge, and finally to an aesthetic or critical judgment.

In conclusion, engraving, like other image reproduction techniques, has possibilities for development towards forms of knowledge and experience that are divergent and expansive. It is content that cannot be restricted to manual work - undoubtedly necessary but not conclusive - but requires being thought and experienced as an opening towards other modalities of appropriation and production of personal or collective imaginaries. Likewise, if the approach to the Express and Create visual axis does not mention the particular phenomenon by which engraving produces images, the perceptual foundation of visual thinking and experimental and creative practice is lost. The

creation of images in engraving occurs through very particular operations (incisions, additive, and trama methods, among others), which leads to the results (produced on a matrix and then printed on paper or other material support) being difficult to predict, especially considering the promotion of creativity.

Consequently, the fact that there is an omission of broad areas of performance in this technique, particularly within the curricular decision, refers to what Elliot Eisner (2002) called null curriculum. This concept, extensively discussed in educational literature, refers to what is omitted from the school curriculum. For Eisner, what is omitted from the curriculum is as important as what is finally prescribed. As explained with the case of engraving, the omissions of the Visual Arts curriculum do not consider that the personal experience of the student can be expanded, interacted with, and enriched with knowledge outside their own existence:

The kind of decisions individuals make is not only influenced by what they know but also by what they do not know. Therefore, large areas of important but unexamined content can greatly influence the decisions people make and the kinds of lives they lead. Therefore, symbol systems not only have the potential to provide unique forms of meaning but also have the potential to practice and develop particular mental skills. Without these skills, the meanings made possible through different symbol systems will be irretrievable. (Eisner, 1985, p. 81, own translation)

In summary, the dispute raised against the Visual Arts curriculum, exemplified in the didactic unit of engraving corresponding to I° Medio, is that the constitution of disciplinary knowledge in the curriculum proposal exhibits a notable absence of networks of concepts that are relevant to the theoretical understanding of the central aspect of this content. Furthermore, there are omissions of some interpretative frameworks and symbol systems in Eisner’s words, such as art history, aesthetics, iconology, and the semiotics of the image, among others, which are frequently used to address reflection in the field of visual arts. As examined, the Express and Create Visually axis practice is weakened by a proposal that ignores the quality of visual thinking intrinsic to engraving, as well as the language linked to

graphic design, advertising, and printed media. These substantive and syntactic inconsistencies, according to Schwab (1964), alert, on the one hand, about an epistemic weakening in the area and, on the other hand, warn of a deprivation of both the conceptual and procedural potential of the contents that enable a learning experience towards the world. Finally, what is required in the face of a curriculum of these characteristics is a didactic orientation that invites students to an opening that incorporates the theoretical, and conceptual potential and connects making with ideation, creation with reflection, and communication with an aesthetically grounded and culturally situated experience.

A Decolonial Didactics in the Face of the Latent Tension of the Curriculum

Developing skills to interrogate images has become an increasingly relevant demand in the training of individuals for the 21st century. Thus, the role of visual arts as a means of understanding and questioning reality—in a broad sense—was consolidated with the successive appearances of different avant-garde and post-avant-garde trends (Foster, 2001). Therefore, questions related to the implications of determining the meaning of visual production and the orientations that artistic practices have for educational contexts constitute new problems and challenges in which visual arts must propose different readings and propositions in the current educational scenario.

An overall approach to the Visual Arts curriculum proposal makes it clear that these are centralized guidelines for the Chilean school system. This requirement, to be considered when implementing teaching and learning processes, has, at least in its declarative form, an openness to interventions and strategies that teachers can carry out in their context. However, as examined in the previous sections, it is concerning that Visual Arts programs predominantly establish procedural developments, which deactivate the relationship with the environment and its social, cultural, and aesthetic implications in the absence of the continuity and interaction principles explained earlier. Consequently, the focus shifts towards exploring subjectivity that caters to a spontaneous response but lacks informed disciplinary substance and, even less, an interrogative stance. This highlights the extent to which critical potential is postponed in the operationalization of the prescribed curriculum, nullifying the possibility of opening up the content for those professionals who have not acquired expert knowledge. This lack of knowledge in the curricular disposition of the subject not only results in a superficial and epidermal approach to its aesthetic, historical, semiotic, and culturally dense components but also deepens the immediacy of the aforementioned procedure, causing an interpretative detachment—meaning a lack of context and urgency regarding the exploration of the connotations, implications, and meanings of the images. In a similar line, Miranda and Espinoza (2015) have denounced that foreign methods and models proposed in the curriculum play a role in predetermining “cultural meanings” rather than linking the daily life of the school with “reality” (p. 17); they tend to stereotype it. In this sense, as it has already been shown that the curriculum device advocates for a social efficiency that “does not lend itself to different interpretations” (Mineduc, 2015, p. 17), it also reveals the lack of a specific didactic perspective.

Given the state of affairs, critical didactics is proposed here, guiding practice and reflection. Critical didactics, which is known as the heir of critical theory, is presented as an integration of theory and practice, occupying a place of synthesis between modern and postmodern projects (Rodríguez Rojo, 1997). In this way, critical didactics is understood here as a disciplinary approach whose theory and practice cooperate based on an educational action that conceives the historically situated student and in which it seeks to promote a

growing self-determination, co-determination, and solidarity in all dimensions of life while also taking into account that the reality of educational institutions often does not correspond to the mentioned objective, so the necessary processes of change towards a permanent reform can only be driven by an effort to democratize the entire society” (Klafki, 1986, p. 42).

In the end, a critical didactics is proposed that not only allows organizing the disjointed fragments of the Visual Arts curriculum into organized conceptual frameworks but also, through communicative and reconstructive action (Rodríguez Rojo, 1997), insembrates, in the Chilean case, this culturally inert, socially uncritical, and symbolically dumb zone, with academic knowledge to interact with local histories, visual narratives, and the plurality of subjectivities. The recognition of minority groups, peripheries, and divergent identities proposed by some authors (Efland, Freedman, and Stuhr, 2003; Freedman, 2006), especially under postmodern and postcolonial pedagogical frameworks (Barbosa, 2015), are undoubtedly openings toward singularity and multiplicity, intrinsic to aesthetic experience. These considerations allow for verbalizing and opening reflection towards a position that considers other forms of existence divergent from hegemonic discourses of power, thus allowing for situated and reflective critical didactics.

In this line of thought, it can also be considered that a position situated in the concept of postmodernity tends to continue that modern thought under the understanding that this reason project hides a destructive irrationality, tending towards the annihilation of the other for the benefit of the colonizer (Dussel, 2000, p. 29). However, unlike the modern conception, postmodernity renounces reason,

undermining the preeminence of metanarratives (Lyotard, 1987, p. 4). On the contrary, this distrust of discursive hegemony allows, at the same time, to consider the emergence of other narratives that were marginalized from the modern story, including the inclusion of geographic peripheries and marginalized groups.

Particularly, the interest of authors in the decolonial perspective lies in its ability to raise awareness from the contemporary towards other demarcations, narratives, otherness, and worldviews that can be part of a situated and conscious curricular appropriation of the specific context (Cabrera Salort, 2017; Gómez, 2019). This includes highlighting the role that the exercise of different subjectivities inscribed in the school space plays as a cultural dimension. As Efland, Freedman, and Stuhr (2003, p. 84) point out: “Teachers, in turn, interpret and reformulate the curricular contents to present them to students; and these reinterpret the information received according to their own abilities, gender, ethnic context, and a long series of conditions.” The reception of content is conditioned by these abilities and the symbolic environment in which it is inserted. That is, the interpretation of images, the critical analysis of their genealogies, and reappropriations from a decolonial perspective enable an epistemology to rethink reflection, artwork reading, and visual artistic production in the school classroom. This serves to redefine the context by establishing a pedagogical stance that wproblematizes the forms of expression and cultural and social imaginaries of artistic artifacts and visual culture.

In other words, the supposed neutrality that the Chilean curriculum suggests by omission ignores that identity forms and expressions are diverse, plural, and situated, emerging from the awareness of the consciousness of the continent as a syncretism of different countries with their sociocultural realities, isolated individuals, and given relationships between subjects and contexts (Acha, 1996). Consequently, as explained by Acha, the concept of identity in Latin America becomes problematic, as it has tended for a long time to think of this term in the sense of a static, delineated, and finished concept. Without necessarily recognizing its mobile and changing nature due to the cultural multiplicity of the territory, this brought about an imprecision that most Latin American states controlled to manipulate cultural imports that permeated different areas of culture.

It is essential to note that the outline of this notion of identity seeks to promote an emancipation of subjects (teachers and students) instituted in a marginal, or non-aligned, subjectivity to the postcolonial hegemonic order. Thus, the notion of Latin American identity, with that trait of immobility, tensions hybridity and changing determinations of heterogeneous Latin American cultures. Therefore, from the perspective of critical didactics, it seems reasonable to use the term in the plural, under an approach that sees the validation of other voices, whether of resistances, dissidences, or divergences, as key characteristics for the proposal of decolonial didactics.

Although the decolonization process involves gaining independence from colonialism, it is largely coextensive with modernity (Walsh, Mignolo, and García, 2006). In this sense, the appearance of states declared independent of the imperial powers that once occupied them might give the impression of producing societies with better conditions and their own identities. However, those same territories that were once colonies often found themselves in more unfavorable positions and with higher levels of poverty than in the preceding times (Ferro, 2000, p. 42).

Ultimately, decoloniality as a language operation proposes dismantling the logic of coloniality that operates in three differentiated areas: first, in political and economic power that constitutes the State; second, in the domain of epistemic, philosophical, and scientific knowledge, and that linked to language; and finally, in the realm of subjective being, which includes the control of sexuality and the roles of genders (Walsh, Mignolo, and García, 2006, p. 13). In this sense, decolonization operates as an emancipatory movement of colonial thought that remains implicit, meaning it is updated in conceiving reality.

According to Walsh, Mignolo, and García (2006), in the Chilean case, colonial thought remains naturalized in modern rationality in its update under the form of progress and the aspiration of liberal democracy. Without delving too deeply, the hegemony of different Eurocentric and North American views more easily recognized in the late-capitalist moment of modernity is revealed. Therefore, a deeply colonialist operation has been identified in modernity, while movements that revise it can be seen as ideological oppositions close to decoloniality.

Regarding the above, Santos (2014) states that Western modernity thinking is an “abyssal thought” (p. 21). With this notion, this author fundamentally refers to a way of thinking linked to the expansion of European thought that proposes a fragmented consciousness that does not denote a reality external or foreign to itself. Thus, the thought of the abyss distinguishes between two universes: one visible, close, concrete, and validated in real experience, and another foreign, on the other side of the line (p. 22), considered and produced as non-existent. This entails the impossibility of recognizing the simultaneity of the two sides of the line, considering a reality, invisibilizing, and not recognizing other modes of existence beyond one’s own.

Under this modality, the other is dark and incomprehensible, lacking essence and ontological density. It can be said that the marginality of this thought submerged in self-awareness is pure negativity in the sense of non-being. In summary, existing culturally outside abyssal thought consists of being the negation of a cultural entity that consolidates and affirms itself as it ignores, denies, or suppresses the reality beyond the line. Therefore, placing oneself in the epistemic abyss of European and colonizing culture implies thinking of one's own culture as a delocalization. This area cannot assert itself except through its relationship with that cultural hegemony that denies and ignores it.

Additionally, Juan Acha proposes that in Latin America, culture is understood as "the production of cultural goods, including the transformations of our nature or geography" (1996, p. 55). This, at the same time, includes the reproduction of cultural goods and the uses and customs that build the collective cultural baggage. From the above, a distinction is made between a hegemonic and paradigmatic culture on the one hand and a popular one typical of minorities on the other hand, which is consistent with the abyssal thought matrix of the colonizer. This point is relevant, as it also brings with it a distinction between cultured and popular production. Thus, the intersections between the cultured and the massive turn the confrontation between the elite and common society into a relativization of the struggle between power and the subordinates since access to symbolic goods democratizes to some extent (García Canclini, 1989). In summary, Latin Americans fluctuate between one and the other cultural manifestation at different levels of imbrication and promote the construction of a culture that changes regularly, especially considering urbanization processes that drive the emergence of a hybrid culture (García Canclini, 1989).

From this reflection, the challenge remains to analyze the relationship between the educational processes of visual arts and the cultural contexts in which images are produced. Therefore, the definition of culture here is understood as the construction of knowledge given in the interaction of educational agents. The identification of art as a production built from culture, overcoming the concept of linear and temporal progress, recognizing difference, democratizing the arts, polysemy, and accepting the context are outstanding characteristics to complexify the concept of culture (Efland, Freedman, and Stuhr, 2003).

This has generated the need to rethink the ways of conceiving teaching in terms of its approaches to the complexity of contemporary visual artistic production and the contexts in which students are situated.

Curricular Aspiration

In the face of the production of contemporary artistic visualities, a curriculum stance that is uncritical and tends toward thematic asepsis is particularly risky. This is because, in the exercise of its implementation, aspects or phenomena that shape the identity of the local cultural milieu and the preference for certain visual and aesthetic imaginaries may be overlooked. As previously mentioned, the omission of certain narratives and subjectivities often stems from a specific cultural hegemony that the decolonial approach seeks to dismantle. Therefore, considering the richness of those themes that precisely interrogate reality and its practices of domination and subjugation allows for problematizing the colonizing model as a hegemonic presence in visual imaginaries and representations. The proposed decolonial perspective thus clearly outlines some persistent modalities of domination that view curriculum regulation as a tool to continue their dominance.

Thinking decolonially is a critical exercise concerning understanding cultural constructions that facilitates the detection of contradictions in the colonial matrix. These contradictions include ideas of progress and universalism that exclude otherness and those not part of this representation matrix. In summary, the decolonial perspective not only allows for observing the world from another place that reveals the invisibilization of the own and the hiding of the identities of southern geographies but also enables the recognition of what is annulled (Eisner, 2002) in the Visual Arts curriculum: a dialogue and encounter of the teacher with their daily pedagogical practice where the knowledge of education, arts, and cultural productions intersect.

In conclusion, it is proposed that an educational action guided by critical didactics allows, through the recovery of the principles of continuity and interaction of experience with its sociocultural context, to reverse the establishment of the internal actions of each student in isolation from their contextual circumstances. Thus, the guiding purpose of critical didactics, as Klafki (1986, p. 57) puts it, is "not to accept or 'apply' certain elements of 'critical theory' without more, but a critical reception and faithful translation of them into the didactic field."

From this perspective, an understanding of education is proposed as a set of interactions aimed at developing capacities not only for self-determination, as a mere promotion of individuality, but also for a solidary co-determination (Klafki, 1986, p. 48) that recognizes the possibility of self-determination for those who have been disadvantaged, either by their beliefs or their minority status. Throughout the text, it has been argued that, in the teaching and learning process of the arts, the quality of the experience of students is exposed to tensions that intensify the recognition of complexity. In this sense, a curriculum that excludes different interpretations imposes a technical and functionalist view that does not value the plurality of experiences and interpretations of the world and also looks with suspicion at what is difficult to operationalize. Thus, Mineduc's maxim of making arts accessible requires a reorientation towards the complex thinking promoted by visual arts. Given the underlying ideas in Chile's Visual Arts Curriculum Guidelines, the challenge is, as Pinar called the curricular purpose, to offer a "complex conversation structured by an ethical commitment to alterity" (2014, p. 8). This, of course, becomes a task that, under the guidance of critical didactics, will allow teachers to navigate both disciplinary shortcomings and didactic absences with resounding success.

Finally, it should be noted that a comparative analysis between the current and previous Chilean Visual Arts curriculum is still pending. Additionally, what has been proposed theoretically in this article remains to be seen: To what extent is the impact observed in learning? How do the didactic strategies of teachers adapt or are affected by this new curriculum? Are students being prepared to understand images in a well-founded and critical manner? In this regard, future research could incorporate other critical positions regarding the implementation issues, considering how teacher narratives are constructed and, ultimately, what didactic consequences confirm or deny the epistemic limitations analyzed throughout the article. However, as a consequence of the argumentation developed here, the authors suggest that future studies systematically investigate the articulation that the disciplinary components of visual arts require with didactics oriented toward learning purposes. This interaction should extend to culturally situated aspects and the rescue of the richness of obliterated imaginaries, narratives, and subjectivities by abyssal thinking.

References

- Acha, J. (1996). *Aproximaciones a la identidad latinoamericana*. México: UNAB.
- Águila, D. (2018). La enseñanza de las artes en la educación chilena: Plan Nacional de Artes en Educación (2015-2018). *Revista GEARTE*, 5(2), 199-208. <http://seer.ufrgs.br/gearte>
- Ávalos, B. (2014). La formación inicial docente en Chile: tensiones entre políticas de apoyo y control. *Estudios Pedagógicos*, 40(1), 11-28.
- Barbosa, A. M. (1998). *Tópicos utópicos*. Belo Horizonte: C/arte. Barbosa, A. M. (2015). La imagen en la enseñanza de arte. Monterrey: UANL.
- Bernstein, B. (1971). On the classification and framing of educational knowledge. En M.F. D. Young (ed.), *Knowledge and control: New directions for the sociology of education* (pp. 47-69). Londres: Collier-Macmillan.
- Cabrera Salort, R. (2017). Abordaje triangular desde un episteme decolonial. *Revista GEARTE*, (4)2, 181-191. <https://seer.ufrgs.br/gearte/article/view/76139/43521>
- Clandinin, D.J. y Connelly, F.M. (1992). Teachers as curriculum maker. En P.W. Jackson (ed.), *Handbook of research on curriculum: A project of the American Educational Research Association* (pp. 486-516). Nueva York: Macmillan.
- Connell, R.W. (1985). *Teachers' work*. Sídney: Allen & Unwin.
- Cox, C. (2006). *Policy formation and implementation in secondary education reform: The case of Chile at the turn of the century*. Education Paper Series, N. 3. Washington D.C.: World Bank.
- Cox, C., Meckes, L. y Bascopé, M. (2010). La institucionalidad formadora de profesores en Chile en la década del 2000: velocidad del mercado y parsimonia de las políticas. *Pensamiento Educativo*, 46-47, 205-245.
- Dewey, J. (1973). *Mi credo pedagógico*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Dewey, J. (1967). *Experiencia y educación*. Buenos Aires: Losada.
- Dussel, E. (2000). Europa, modernidad y eurocentrismo. En E. Lander (ed.), *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas latinoamericanas* (pp. 41-54). Buenos Aires: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (Clacso). <https://www.tni.org/files/download/La%20colonialidad%20del%20saber.%20Eurocentrismo%20y%20ciencias%20sociales.pdf>
- Efland, A.D. (2004). *Arte y cognición*. Barcelona: Octaedro.
- Efland, A., Freedman, K. y Stuhr, P. (2003). *La educación en el arte posmoderno*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Eisner, E.W. (1985). *The educational imagination: On the design and evaluation of school programs*. Nueva York: Macmillan.
- Eisner, E.W. (1988). Foreword. En F. M. Connelly y D. J. Clandinin, *Teachers as curriculum planners: Narrative of experience* (pp. ix-xi). Toronto, Ontario: Teachers College Press.
- Eisner, E.W. (2002). *The educational imagination*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.
- Errázuriz, L. H. (2004). *La educación artística en el sistema escolar chileno*. http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=19709&URL_DO=DO_PRINTPAGE&URL_SECTION=201.
- Ferro, M. (2000). *La colonización: una historia global*. México: Siglo XXI.
- Foster, H. (2001). *El retorno de lo real: la vanguardia a finales de siglo*. Madrid: Akal.
- Freedman, K. (2006). *Enseñar la cultura visual. Currículum, estética y la vida social del arte*. Barcelona: Octaedro.
- Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogía del oprimido*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI.

- García Canclini, N. (1989). *Culturas híbridas. Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad*. México: Grijalbo.
- Gómez, P. P. (2019). Decolonialidad estética: geopolíticas del sentir el pensar y el hacer. *Revista GEARTE*, 6(2), 369-389. <https://seer.ufrgs.br/gearte/article/view/92910>
- Goodson, I. F. (1983). *School subjects and curriculum change*. Londres: Falmer.
- Gysling, J. (2003). La reforma curricular: itinerario de una transformación cultural. En C. Cox (ed.), *Políticas educacionales en el cambio de siglo* (pp. 213-252.). Santiago: Editorial Universitaria.
- Jameson, F. (1991). *El posmodernismo o la lógica cultural del capitalismo avanzado*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Klafki, W. (1986). Los fundamentos de una didáctica crítico-constructiva. *Revista de Educacion*, 1(280), 37-79. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=18523>
- Korosick, J.S. (1996). Who ever said studying art would be easy? The growing cognitive demands of understanding works of art in the information age. *Studies in Art Education*, 38(1), 4-20. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1320309>
- Lyotard, J. F. (1987). *La condición postmoderna. Informe sobre el saber*. Madrid: Cátedra.
- Ministerio de Educación de Chile (Mineduc) (2013). *Bases Curriculares 2013: primero a sexto básico*. Santiago de Chile.
- Ministerio de Educación de Chile (Mineduc) (2015). *Bases Curriculares. 7° básico a 2° medio*. Santiago de Chile.
- Miranda, L. y Espinoza, M. (2015). El currículo de artes visuales en la educación chilena. *Docencia*, XX(57), 17-27. http://revistadocencia.cl/~revist37/web/images/ediciones/Docencia_57.pdf
- Pinar, W. (2014). *La teoría del currículum*. Madrid: Narcea.
- Rodríguez Rojo, M. (1997). *Hacia una didáctica crítica*. Madrid: La Muralla.
- Sancho, J. (1990). *Los profesores y el currículum: fundamentación de una propuesta*. Barcelona: ICE-Horsoris.
- Santos, B. S. (2014). *Epistemologías del sur*. Madrid: Akal.
- Schwab, J. J. (1964). Structure of the disciplines: Meanings and significance. En G.W.Ford y L. Pugno (eds.), *The structure of knowledge and the curriculum* (pp. 6-30). Chicago: Rand McNally and Co.
- Schwab, J.J. (1973). The practical 3: Translation into curriculum. *The School Review*, 81(4), 501-522. <https://doi.org/10.1086/443100>
- Short, G. (1995). Understanding domain knowledge for teaching: Higher-order thinking in pre-service art teacher specialists. *Studies in Art Education*, 39(3), 154-169. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1320906>
- Silva, A. (2015). Conocimiento disciplinario de los profesores de artes visuales: antecedentes para una discusión pendiente. En A. Orbeta (ed.), *Educación artística. Propuestas, investigación y experiencias recientes* (pp. 59-95). Santiago: Publicaciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado.
- Walsh, C., Mignolo, W. y García, A. (2006). *Interculturalidad, descolonización del estado y del conocimiento*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Signo.

How to cite

Silva, A., Raquimán, P. y Zamorano, M. (2020). Inert Experience in the Visual Arts: Critical Review of the Chilean Curriculum. *(pensamiento), (palabra)... Y obra*, (29), 6-24. <https://doi.org/10.17227/ppo.num24-12140>