UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Theories and Methodologies of Art-Based Research for Education

2627-1-F5702R002

Course title

Theories and Methodologies of Arts-Based Research for Education. Pedagogical documentation as a research strategy

Topics and course structure

Can arts offer useful insights into educational and training processes? If so, which arts? And how?
Can, morevoer, artistic languages and practices become a resource for documenting and narrating outside the contexts the knowledge and learning generated in them?
Can art be a strategy to involve persons of those services and contexts in the interventions, activated in an inclusive and participatory perspective?

These are some of the questions that will guide the course, studying and deepening arts-based research (arts-based methods) as an approach to research that focuses on a "systematic use of the artistic process... as a primary way of understanding and examining experience..." (McNiff, 2008, p.29) otherwise inaccessible through more traditional forms of knowledge and methods of enquiry.

The course will investigate arts-based research practices to **explore**, **understand** and **document** educational and training processes. Exploration, understanding and documentation are, in fact, fundamental dimensions of arts-based approaches in research that prove to be strategic when approaching educational processes, complex human and social phenomena that cannot always be understood using linear research methods.

A specific part of the course will be devoted to the visual arts, specifically, work will be done on **photography** (as photo elicitation and as a research process) and on **collage** (as *collage inquiry* and as a reflexive strategy).

Lastly, artistic languages will be traversed as strategies and tools for **documenting and sharing the educational**

processes , thus fostering the dissemination of knowledge constructed in the contexts.

Arts-based enquiry practices will, therefore, be an integral part of each lesson, to understand how the arts can become a resource at every stage of the research, from the definition of the study question, to the construction of an enquiry design and data collection, to the process of analysing and interpreting the data, to the documentation, sharing and dissemination of the results. Great attention will be given to the use of arts-based methodologies for the involvement of all the actors, with a view to a participatory perspective of the research, especially for certain categories of subjects for whom the use of languages alternative to speech may be particularly important, with a view to maximum inclusion.

Research, in this sense, will be understood in the course not only as a strategy of study and scientific knowledge but also as the **practice of the professional** who makes use in his or her daily experience of tools and strategies for observation, analysis and documentation of processes, situations and contexts.

Objectives

Through this course, with regular and active participation in lessons, we aim to PROMOTE the following learning outcomes:

*Knowledge and understanding

- Understanding and mastering artistic, expressive, performative and participatory languages in the field of professional training
- Acquiring knowledge of the theories, methodologies, tools and procedures for training, managing and developing human resources in the artistic and cultural fields
- Acquiring knowledge of models for enhancing the cultural heritage present in educational and training services

*Application of knowledge and comprehension skills

- Ability to apply acquired knowledge to design, implement and evaluate educational activities in cultural and artistic contexts
- Ability to apply artistic languages in organisational contexts
- Ability to apply artistic languages in informal and non-formal educational settings

*Ability to apply knowledge and models

- Identifying and analysing educational and training needs in different contexts, involving the various stakeholders present in those contexts
- Designing and coordinating responses to these needs, utilising and enhancing the potential of the arts
- Ability to apply acquired knowledge to study, design, evaluate and document training activities in cultural and artistic contexts

*Communication skills

- Work in multidisciplinary teams within complex professional contexts and communicate effectively with partners in the educational, organisational and artistic-cultural spheres, as well as with a wider audience
- Use artistic and expressive languages as educational tools to promote critical and divergent thinking, and as innovative means of communication

*Independent judgement

- Develop original ideas and proposals in response to the needs of work contexts
  -Promote innovative research based on the synergy between educational and artistic skills
  -Foster critical and divergent thinking; analyse different professional contexts and identify their needs
  -Design, implement and evaluate training initiatives using artistic languages, whilst also taking into account emerging issues of sustainability and social ethics within the contexts of intervention

*Learning skills
-Use personal methods for self-directed development and tools to support one's own professional growth
-Develop reflective and metacognitive skills to assess the adequacy of one's own knowledge and skills and identify any areas requiring further study

In addition, the course aims to develop reflective and metacognitive skills to monitor the adequacy of one's knowledge and skills and identify areas that need further study.

Methodologies

The course envisages a blended mode: out of 56 hours, 21 hours will be online. The online hours will be mainly of didactic delivery, while the in-presence hours will be mainly dedicated to interactive teaching. The structure of the course generally envisages approximately 18 hours of delivery type teaching and the remainder of interactive type teaching: group work, case analyses, activities supervised by the lecturer.
From a methodological point of view, the course proposes a training course that bases knowledge on the direct experience of the student* of the methodologies studied, through case work and direct practice.

During the course the student will be invited to **think of his or her learning journey as an arts-based research journey**, documenting the process through artistic modes and languages.

The course will be delivered in Italian, but teaching materials will also be available in English.

Online and offline teaching materials

Teaching materials will be provided during the course and made available via the e-learning platform on the course page.

Programme and references

1. A volume from:

- Dewey, J. (2020). Arte come esperienza. Roma: Aesthetica
- Dewey, J. (2023). Arte educazione creatività. Milano: Feltrinelli

3. Biffi, E. (2027) to be published
4. Mastrilli, P., Nicosia, R., Santinello, M. (2016). *Photovoice. Dallo scatto fotografico all'azione sociale.* FrancoAngeli, Milano.
5. A text from:
    - Clark, A., & Moss, P. (2014). Ascoltare i bambini. L'approccio a mosaico. Bergamo: Edizioni Junior.
    - Butler-Kisber, L. (2010). *Qualitative inquiry: Thematic, Narrative and Arts-Informed Perspectives*,

Sage.

It is possible for Erasmus students or other interested students to agree on a bibliography that is entirely in English.

Assessment methods

The test will consist of an oral interview in Italian. There will be no mid-term exams.The examination can be taken in English by Erasmus students.

Through the argumentation that the student will be able to provide during the oral interview, the oral test will ascertain the ability to analyse the contexts relating to research and documentation methodologies based on artistic languages, as well as the reflective skills developed during the course.

For attending students (remote and/or in person), the interview will start from the documentation of their activities, aimed at keeping track of the learning process, according to methods that will be provided during the course.

The exam aims to assess the following areas:

- clarity and conciseness
- argumentation skills
- knowledge of the theoretical models presented during the course and described in the bibliography
- critical and reflective skills in questioning the topics studied
- knowledge of specific studies and research related to art-based approaches to research in education, which will be present in the bibliography
- ability to connect what has been studied to application contexts for research and the study of educational and training processes.

Assessment will be based on the Dublin Descriptors: the level bands are as follows

1. Low level: Not sufficient
   *Knowledge and ability to understand: partial and fragmented knowledge, with inadequate understanding of the main contents; presentation of contents stunted and with poor argumentation, lack of knowledge of specific vocabulary.
   *Applied knowledge and understanding skills: inadequate ability to apply theoretical knowledge to situations and contexts presented, inadequate ability to link the models studied and to argue them from a pedagogical perspective.
   *Ability to apply knowledge and models: inadequate ability to analyse educational situations and identify the most appropriate intervention methodologies; inadequate and fragmentary knowledge of planning, evaluation and documentation strategies of pedagogical interventions according to the strategies and methodologies studied.
   *Autonomy of judgement: inadequate ability to elaborate critical and personal reflections in the face of the topics covered in the course.

2. Average level: Sufficient - Good
   *Knowledge and ability to understand: sufficient knowledge and with adequate understanding of the main contents, although some gaps remain in the in-depth studies; adequate exposition of the contents and with argumentation able to show the study carried out; ability to use the specific vocabulary adequately and to handle references to sources sufficiently.
   *Application of knowledge and applied understanding: sufficient ability to apply theoretical knowledge to situations and contexts presented; ability to present adequate connections between the contents studied and to return them in a sufficiently clear and coherent manner.
   *Ability to apply knowledge and models: sufficient ability to analyse educational situations and to identify the

most appropriate intervention methodologies; ability to move independently between the planning, evaluation and documentation strategies of pedagogical interventions according to the strategies and methodologies studied.
*Autonomy of judgement: sufficient ability to elaborate critical and personal reflections in the face of the topics covered in the course.

3. High level: Distinguished - Excellent
*Knowledge and ability to understand: more than excellent knowledge of the syllabus content, of which a distinct understanding of the main and secondary aspects is shown; exposition of the content exhaustive and with robust argumentation of the connections between the various themes addressed; excellent ability to use the specific vocabulary in a conscious and rigorous manner and to handle references to sources with precision.
*Applied knowledge and understanding: excellent competence in applying theoretical knowledge to situations and contexts presented, moving with mastery in illustrating also with examples and personal reflections the connections between the contents studied and the applied contexts.
*Ability to apply knowledge and models: excellent ability to read and analyse educational situations in order to identify the most appropriate intervention methodologies from among those studied; ability to move with complete autonomy between design, evaluation and documentation strategies of pedagogical interventions according to the strategies and methodologies studied.
*Autonomy of judgement: excellent ability to elaborate critical and personal reflections in the face of the topics covered in the course.

NB: Students with PUOI must email the document to the lecturer before the examination. In addition to accepting requests certified by the PUOI, the lecturer is available for any clarification on the topics of the lectures by appointment in person or remotely.

The interview will last between 20 and 30 minutes.

Office hours

Professor receives by appointment, to be agreed by e-mail (elisabetta.biffi@unimib.it).

Programme validity

The programme runs for two academic years.

Course tutors and assistants

Lucia Carriera, Daniela Corradi, Maria Ratotti

Sustainable Development Goals

GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS