Multimedia and art education: A methodological model of Teacher-Training Studies within the framework of the European Higher Education Area

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Abstract

This project consists of developing an archive of digital material to expand on and support classroom teaching.

With this material, the goal is to make a methodological contribution to facilitate students' independent learning in acquiring their professional competences within the framework of the European ECTS credits.

This material is specific for the course Teaching the Fine Arts I, a core course in the five teacher training diploma programmes.

Most of the students in these programmes have no background in artist training, so the syllabus has been organised to reinforce the knowledge that is regarded as essential. To this end, it has included the transmission theoretical concepts, practical exercises performed within a workshop, and the development of basic contents in order to apply this material in the classroom.

Therefore, we had to update the teaching material in a digital format would make possible a new sort of dialogue with the images and offer students an interactive dimension to facilitate independent learning and teamwork, balance the differences in credits among the different diploma programmes and facilitate personalised attention in overly large groups.

General area of interest of this innovation

The material created was designed for education students. In addition to this group, the contents might also be of interest to all teaching professionals in the field of the human-

ities, and to all teachers of primary and secondary school, vocational education programmes and any art teacher who needs continuing education.

The methodological proposal might also become a model of interest for teaching instrumental practices with large groups who opt for independent learning and interactive communication as a complement to the teacher-led classroom.

1. Objectives

The purpose of this project is to create a variety of new multimedia teaching materials, some of them with two-way interaction with the goal of using different methodology and teaching resources in the course in Teaching the Fine Arts I, which would enhance students' performance and foster communication and interaction between students and professor.

The goals of the project are:

1. To improve the artistic training of students and, as a consequence, to expand their skills as future teachers.
2. To include proposals for independent learning activities based on a type of learning that fosters the transition towards the new model of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).
3. To promote the use of new media and new technologies (intranet and DVDs) as a practice integrated into the student's curriculum and into the professor's teaching practice.
4. Using these means, to encourage students' independent learning and teamwork skills which enable them to expand and extend their knowledge both theoretically and in the processes of practising art, as well as in a variety of teaching methodologies.
5. Using these means, to encourage each students to forge their own more personalised individual pathway in their degree programmes.
6. To bring together the group of professors sharing the same syllabus by encouraging coordination with the updating of the innovative materials.

2. Description of the project

The project consists of creating multimedia materials and in checking the efficacy of these materials.

The materials include a DVD file with all the digitalised materials (videos, photos and text) and a two-way interactive website.

Five DVDs have been produced from the archive materials, four with a presentation of the theoretical contents of the course on art and teaching art, and one to support artistic practice. The archive also contains additional material and support material for the projects of each of the professors of the course which, coupled with other occasional materials, will be uploaded the website throughout the entire academic year. This is the part of the archive that can be expanded and changed from one year to the next with new contributions.

Therefore, the contents of the DVD include stable contents, the five aforementioned DVDs, and occasional, variable material which is the working material for each of the topics that each professor administers at his or her own convenience and pace. This material is made available via a website (Figure 1).

The contents of the archive are distributed as follows:

- A collection of three DVDs for the subjects: drawing, colour, volume (Part 2 topics).
- A DVD for didactic topics (Part 1 and 3 topics).
- A DVD for resources related to artistic practices (Part 4).
- An archive with additional and support materials for each topic (Parts 1, 2, 3).

Figure 1. The parts with their corresponding contents
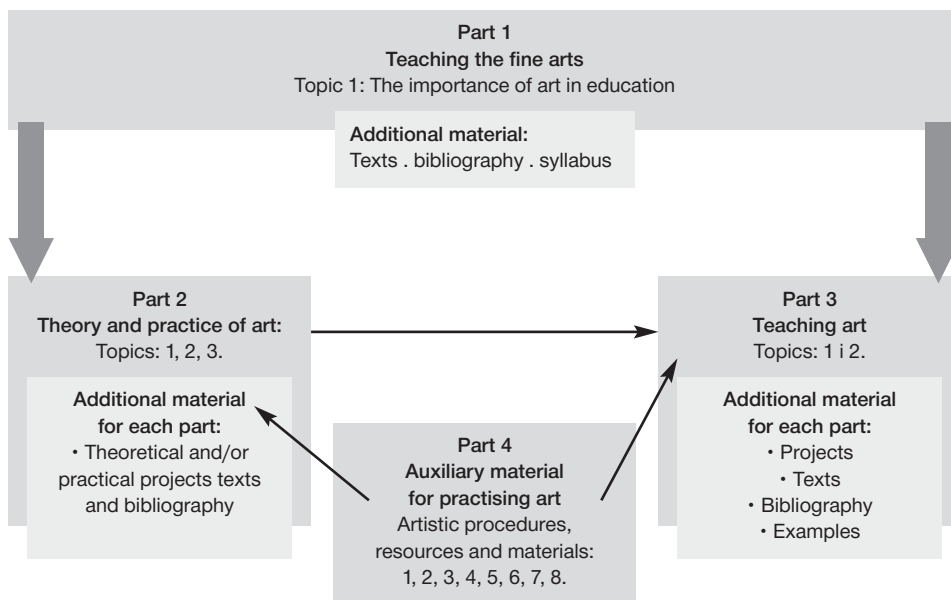
This material is targeted to students in the core course Teaching the Fine Arts I in the Teacher Education Programme at the UAB. It is a 4-, 5- or 6-credit core course in the diploma programme on teaching in the Faculty of Education, and it is also a transversal course, that is, it is also part of the following degree programmes: Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, Special Education, Physical Education and Foreign Language Education. Therefore, almost all the students in the degree programme must take it.

Most of the students in these programmes have no background in artist training, so the syllabus of this core course has been organised to reinforce the knowledge that is regarded as essential:

1. Conceptual contents on art through its practice. This means theoretical classes with workshop practices using a variety of materials and supports (Parts 2 and 4).
2. Educational contents. Psycho-educational and curricular knowledge with examples of application in early childhood and primarily education (Parts 1 and 3).

The classes in this core course tend to be large (50-65 students), especially when developing the practical facet of the artistic subjects as in this part students need individualised attention and assistance. If we bear in mind that we must promote independent learning, we saw the urgent need for a methodological change. The goal is to attend to students taking into account the wide variety of initial knowledge that they have of art, and, in the instrumental part, to respect the learning pace of each student. Each student's immersion in the artistic process is individual.

The group of professors who teach this core course has been saying for years that the material used individually in the classrooms should be agreed upon by consensus.

The process of developing this project was conducted according to the needs that arise in the classroom. We began to giving support to those aspects of the practice of art, that is, the instrumental part, where students have more shortcomings that cannot be dealt with properly because of the sheer number of students. In view of this concern, the first subject to be examined was artistic techniques, in order to later go on to the cornerstones sustaining the contents in this field: the concept of art, drawing, painting, volume and the creative processes. The educational contents are in the last part.

Audiovisual materials were created for each of these thematic parts, namely drawing, colour and volume, made up of a symbiosis of an image and a text. In these audiovisuals, the strength of the image, both still and in motion, is the key to understanding the different contents. This dialogue between text and image is transformed into the backbone of the project.

Figure 2. Images taken from the DVD on drawing.

The images in Figure 2 take on a more interesting meaning in the context of the field if they are accompanied by a text that explains why they are. This case is highly illustrative of the difficulty that is often encountered when drawing. Normally this is overcome by stereotyped images, ignoring the possibility of observing; so we must learn to look.

In these audiovisual materials, we have chosen as testimonial referents images of artists, painters, sculptors, texts by educators, art theoreticians, philosophers and also artists as a point of departure for defining concepts that are considered essential for understanding the field.

In the training of future teachers, we believe that artistic education is basic for the integral formation of the individual, as it provides elements for being able to think, understand and express, that is, an entire series of tools that are part of nonverbal communication. Art is not an island, rather a kind of knowledge.

«Art is a form of knowledge as precious to mankind as the world of philosophy or science. Of course, only when we clearly admit that art is a form of knowledge parallel to any other, yet different from them, through which mankind manages to comprehend his environment, can we begin to appreciate its importance in the history of humanity» (Read, 1977)

Despite the fact that the new technologies are common working tools that professors and students tend to use every day as a means of information and communication, we can perceive the lack of specific teaching materials that might facilitate the process of acquiring knowledge. With the creation of digital teaching materials, we reinforce the experimentation with and piloting of new technologies with a website where a new interactive model of learning is developed with monitoring by the professor.

3. Methodology

The decision to develop interactive digital materials related to knowledge of the fine arts came from the fact that images are as important as text, as they are the subject being studied as well as the content, which requires us to control not just the procedure but also the formal design of this product.

This control was achieved by using the same working team to produce and direct, as the members had both the knowledge and the infrastructure needed to do this.

The procedure was as follows:

1. First, the schema of the different content parts of the entire course was developed.
2. We decided to sequence the production according to the classroom needs and the possibilities available.
   2.1. The first thing to be produced was Part 4, for two reasons: this material was more urgently needed because it aimed to support very hands-on contents in which students needed individual attention, and it enables students to watch the same action repeatedly without the professor having to repeat it. The second reason was that it seemed like the easiest part to make. Thus, from the start of this part we were very clear on the format, that it had to be in video

       as it consists of demonstrations of actions that provide information on how to use the tools and materials.

    2.2. We then continued with Part 2, because there is a great deal of visual material for art-related subjects. All we had to do was write a text and find a visual formula, that is, an audiovisual script that was persuasive.

    2.3. We left Parts 1 and 3 for the end, because generally speaking the topics are not so visual and obviously there is not as much graphic material.

3.   We decided to make an audiovisual script of each of the topics. This could be considered the most important point in the production of this material. The script was sometimes generated by merging or restructuring a text or images or other things based only on a text.

    3.1. Part 1. It starts with an original text as an introduction. It has been presented in video format in the guise of a chat between a professor and four students.

    3.2. Part 2. Each topic is a script that combines video, photo and text with an off-screen voice and background music. Once the first topic on drawing was finished, the same formula was then applied to the two other topics in this part, thus forming a uniform whole.

    3.3. Part 3. We have chosen the subjects on which texts are being written, and they will each be presented in a different format, still to be determined.

    3.4. Part 4. This is a series of technical demonstrations on video which can be accessed via an interactive index.

4.   For each subject we have to: gather and select the existent material, such as photos and texts.

5.   Produce the material in which no external help is needed: filming the images, writing the texts, digitalising the images.

6.   Edit the images and sound by the image technician based on the script.

7.   Parallel to the development of each topic, we have to gather, digitalise and archive the additional material from each professor in files, which will be part of the archive used to feed the website.

8.   Work in conjunction with the image technician to produce the definitive DVDs.

9.   The technician is in charge of producing a master DVD as an archive of resources containing all the material produced.

4. Results

With regard to the results, as of now we can talk about the results of the production of the material made to date.

    There are four DVDs ready to be edited: drawing, painting, volume and the technical support material. Therefore, we now have specific material, although only in the hands of the professors who may decide on the editing aspects in order to effectively put it into practice. However, we can now poised to check the efficacy of this material.

Even though producing the material is a slow process, it is proceeding at a good pace and shows a more than acceptable quality if we bear in mind that the theoretical and technical team is one and the same.

We can state that we have not yet been able to put this material to the test systematically, partly because the students would have had to have the DVDs in their possession, as the goal is for them to be able to see and revise them at their own pace. We have focused attention on producing material, and in consequence it has not yet been published. Starting now is when we will study how to evaluate the materials.. However, the professors have occasionally used the support DVD in the classroom for students who were having difficulties understanding the use of a given technique or topic (drawing), and the students' responses have been quite positive. Those who used the material repeatedly asked where they could get it. While the professors individually help one student, the group is watching a demonstration on the classroom TV, and this dynamic means saving time and more effective dissemination.

We hope to publish all the materials in order to check the part corresponding to putting the DVDs into practice in a more systematic way.

5. Conclusions

This project is ambitious not just in terms of the results of its implementation but also in terms of the production of material. For the time being, the results of this production are proceeding apace if we take into account the fact that the process is laborious.

We should mention that we still need to manage a virtual platform for setting up the website, as the one offered by the UAB is insufficient for our purposes. One alternative is Caront (Martí, E.; Rocarias, J.; Radeva, P.; Toledo, R. and Vitrià, J. 2006), which was created at the UAB itself and is planned to start operating immediately.

We also have plans to continue producing materials for other courses and to produce a collection of DVDs on art education that would be open to other areas in the Department of Expression (music and dance).

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Keywords

Independent learning, non-classroom teaching, virtual resources.

Financing

Supplementary materials on the CD-ROM

Video showing two excerpts from the *Drawing* and *Support for Artistic Processes DVDs*.

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Presentation of the working group

The proposal for this project emerged from a group of professors in the Unit on Visual and Art Education in the Department of Teaching Musical, Artistic and Corporal Expression who teach the course on Teaching the Fine Arts I in the teacher education diploma programme.

The members all share basic points of departure when transmitting the different syllabi within the field. As trainers of future teachers, they believe that visual and art education is basic for the integral education of the individual, and they believe in training future teachers with a dynamic attitude, in lifelong learning and accepting new instruments for acquiring knowledge. They are motivated by embarking on a teaching innovation project to construct a new form of communication and interaction with students.

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