

EXPANDED SUMMARY

*Media images in art education: reflections based
on the curricular guidelines of Brazil and Quebec*

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Introduction

We live in a world increasingly mediated by images, with their production and circulation intensified by new media. In 2023, artificial intelligence created more images than all the photographs produced in the past 150 years (Valyaeva, 2023). Constantly renewed by diverse contexts and perspectives, these images are widely disseminated through the media and, like other social themes, become relevant within the school environment. In light of this, this article discusses how media images, especially advertisements, can bring students closer to artistic knowledge by encouraging a sensitive and critical reading of these visual productions. The text presents an excerpt from a doctoral research project that included an academic exchange at the University of Montreal, focusing on visual arts didactics. Based on this, the curricular guidelines of Brazil (BNCC) and Quebec (PFEQ) are analyzed, reflecting on their contributions and limitations regarding the treatment of media images in art education.

Seeing, feeling and thinking media images

The configuration of a new imagetic system has required art education to go beyond artistic images and consider other types of images (Hernández, 2007). This subject has already been extensively studied by many researchers (Barbosa, 2012; Rossi, 2009; Pillar, 2014; Richard, 2012; Lalonde, Castro, Pariser, 2020). However, not every image approach is capable of fostering the development of an autonomous and critical visual reading of the world (Francez; Sant'Anna, 2023). It is necessary to develop an education that mobilizes and stimulates more critical and meaningful interpretations of images (Hernández, 2007).

In contemporary Western society, virtual spaces are commonly frequented by young people, who tend to view the images they encounter as references for the construction of their identity and subjectivity. Among these are advertising images, which are associated with cultural practices and forms of socialization. These images possess strong persuasive power, and are linked to pleasurable experiences.

Inviting students to perceive the constitutive processes of these images becomes an essential task for teachers. The goal is to spark students' curiosity and guide them toward "[...] an art education that fosters the development of sensitive and autonomous gazes, capable of seeing their surroundings with depth, sharpness, criticality, and emancipation" (Sant'Anna et al., 2022, p. 7).

The key to this approach lies in adopting an active gaze toward these images, engaging with them through their production and reception contexts. Helping to sharpen this critical capacity can enable students to continue questioning and discerning the messages and values embedded in the visual representations that surround them. An education centered on sensitivity and criticality aims to form more conscious and critical individuals in a society saturated with images.

Media images in BNCC

In 2017, a national document called National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) was approved in Brazil. The BNCC presents the skills to be developed in students and considers the arts as a language. The document defines the objectives of artistic learning according to the generic objectives attributed to the domain of communication and expression, which include Portuguese, English and Physical Education. All languages of art must articulate six dimensions of knowledge: creation, criticism, esthetics, expression, enjoyment and reflection (Brazil, 2017).

Among the dimensions that most closely resemble the appreciation of images are criticism, which involves aesthetic, political, historical, philosophical, social, economic and cultural aspects; esthetics, which articulates sensitivity and perception; enjoyment, which refers to pleasure and sensitive openness to artistic and cultural practices; and reflection, which concerns the "attitude of perceiving, analyzing and interpreting artistic and cultural manifestations" (Brazil, 2017, p. 195).

Regarding specific art skills, we observed a brief approach to advertising images, advising that students should "establish relationships between art, media, market and consumption, understanding, in a critical and problematizing way, modes of production and circulation of art in society" (Brasil, 2017, p. 196).

Regarding the objects of knowledge and skills to be operated in the visual arts, we observed few consonances with media images. For the 6th to 9th grade classes, the indicators that come closest are: 1) the ability to “analyze situations in which the languages of the visual arts are integrated with audiovisual languages [...], scenographic, choreographic, musical, etc.”; and 2) the ability to “differentiate the categories of artist, artisan, cultural producer, curator, designer, among others [...]” (Brasil, 2017, p. 204-205). Image reading can only be related to the elements of visual language as an object of knowledge to be worked on, however its analysis is limited to artistic productions.

We note that the document does not point out the appreciation of media images, especially advertising images, as an essential skill to be developed in art education, ignoring the skills that surround it and its specificities.

Media images in PFEQ

Since 2001 in Quebec, the Québec Education Program (PFEQ) (Québec, 2007) has provided guidelines for teaching in all schools in the province, and its publication was revised in 2007. According to the document, education in the visual arts enables individuals to understand the world visually, interpret images with sensitivity, and cultivate their critical and aesthetic discernment (Québec, 2007).

The general objectives for the visual arts discipline are structured around three competencies: 1) creation of personal images; 2) creation of media images; and 3) appreciation of images. As this study focuses on advertising images, we will focus on competency no. 2, since it deals with media images, and competency no. 3, since it deals with appreciation that also involves this type of image. The PFEQ indicates that the creation of media images is an essential process for the development of students' communication skills, both for learning the elements that correspond to visual language and for a reflective understanding of the influence of such images in their daily lives. However, the program does not seem to explore the interactions between communication and artistic creation, since it divides personal creation and media creation into two distinct categories (Richard; Lacelle, 2020).

Regarding the appreciation of images, the PFEQ indicates that 30% of art classes should be dedicated to the development of this skill, which should take place around the actions of analysis, the construction of personal interpretation, the understanding of the experience of appreciation and critical and aesthetic judgment. The role of the teacher is that of a cultural facilitator, providing, when necessary, a specific pedagogical path that can consider the skills, interests, prior knowledge, creativity and capacity for appreciation of their students (Québec, 2007).

The document considers the expansion of students' visual repertoire, which may include advertising images. This finding reinforces the importance of considering such visual objects in students' education. However, there is no relationship with students' ability to perceive images based on their own sensitivity, or to exercise their senses in relation to them. Such images in the PFEQ are more related to the need to develop practical decoding skills, that is, to focus only on their communicative side, rather than to sharpen students' sensitive capacity.

Conclusion

The BNCC considers the image-based approach, but this brief study noted limitations in the analysis and discussion of media images, especially advertising images. The lack of guidelines for a critical approach to these images reflects a gap that needs to be filled so that art education can be integrated into the social and cultural reality of students and contemporary challenges.

The PFEQ presents a more structured approach to the appreciation of media images. However, it is understood that this appreciation cannot disregard the sensitive dimension of students, nor fail to highlight the artistic production practices with which they are related.

These considerations indicate the need for a more sensitive and dialogical perspective for the approach to images. It is essential that art education incorporates practices that favor perception, critical and creative reflection, allowing students to appropriate media images and understand them as agents of meaning production. This movement can start with curricula, but it can also be put into practice by art teachers

who, due to their didactic autonomy, can contribute to a broader aesthetic education for their students.¹

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¹ Translated by Janice Matté Francez, BA in Portuguese and English Language, from the Fundação de Ensino do Pólo Geo-Educacional do Vale do Itajaí (FEPEVI), 1984. jmfrancez@gmail.com

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