

## EDUCATING THROUGH SOUND: REIMAGINING ART EDUCATION WITH MUSIC AT ITS CORE

**Ana Beatriz Ramos Monteiro**

Department of Education University of the State of Minas Gerais (UEMG) – Campus Ibirité  
Ibirité, Minas Gerais, Brazil

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17413615>

### Abstract

*This article, which presents the results of research carried out during a postdoctoral residency in the Stricto Sensu Graduate Program in Education and Teaching – PROMESTRE – Professional Master's in Education and Teaching – FaE/UFGM, sought to uncover the relationships, conceptions, and practices that Youth and Adult Education (EJA) teachers develop in the arts, especially music in this context. The objective is to analyze the relationships established by art teachers, particularly in EJA, with music as part of their pedagogical practice, taking into account the diversity and heterogeneity of this educational context. This qualitative-quantitative research is situated in the field of EJA, intersecting with references from Art and Music to build its theoretical framework. Data collection was carried out through a virtual questionnaire made available on Google Forms, composed of open and closed questions, and sent to Art teachers working in Minas Gerais. The results showed that few teachers establish direct relationships with music in their teaching practice, offering almost no opportunities to work with this artistic component in the classroom. Among those with a background in Art, Music is not included due to their limited understanding of this language as a field of knowledge and curricular component. Thus, the article highlights the concern and need to review and reformulate pedagogical practices in EJA that value and recognize the importance of music as an artistic language and cultural practice. It also emphasizes the importance of supporting and offering methodological possibilities and alternatives in music for teachers working in this educational modality.*

**Keywords:** Youth and Adult Education; Art; Music in EJA.

### I. Introduction

This article presents the results of research in Youth and Adult Education (EJA), which sought to uncover the relationships, conceptions, and practices that EJA teachers develop in art, especially music, considering the diverse and heterogeneous educational environment. EJA is a form of education guaranteed by law, offered by public education systems and private initiatives, and intended for people aged 15 and over who did not have access to regular education at the appropriate age.

Returning to the classroom, regardless of age, can represent an opportunity for transformation, better working conditions, improved quality of life, acquisition of new knowledge and skills, and the fulfillment

of individual needs. It can also lead to integration into literate society, from which one is excluded when lacking proficiency in reading and writing. Therefore, EJA aims to correct distortions in the educational and social process of these individuals, in accordance with Resolution CNE/CEB No. 1, of July 5, 2000, which establishes the National Curriculum Guidelines for Youth and Adult Education. In this document, EJA is recognized as "an unresolved social debt with those who did not have access to or mastery of reading and writing as social goods in school and outside of it" (Brazil, 2000). According to the Resolution (Brazil, 2000, p. 26), it is a modality with "its own profile, a special feature within a process considered a reference measure. It is, therefore, a way of existing with its own characteristics." EJA is also addressed in the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education, Law No. 9.394 of 1996 (LDB 9.394/96). In Chapter II, Section V – On Youth and Adult Education, Article 37 states that "youth and adult education shall be intended for those who did not have access to or continuity in elementary and secondary education at the appropriate age" (Brazil, 1996, p. 30). Although institutionally it may be considered a single segment, EJA encompasses a very distinct universe of social processes and practices experienced by young people, adults, and the elderly of various age groups.

Therefore, EJA's main function is to provide education to those who did not have access to or continuity in basic education (mostly individuals from the working class), thus promoting their social inclusion and full citizenship.

The interest in investigating the role of Art/Music in EJA arises from a previously unfamiliar universe for me, since my earlier research focused on music in Elementary and Early Childhood Education. Therefore, this study focused on the uses, meanings, and significance produced from the teaching practices of Art teachers working in EJA, with special attention to music. The main objective of the research was to analyze the relationship established by Art teachers, particularly in EJA, with music as part of their pedagogical practice, taking into account the diversity and heterogeneity of this educational context.

We also defined specific objectives:

- To investigate the conceptions, beliefs, and ideas about Art and Music that guide the pedagogical practices of Art teachers in EJA;
  - To identify the challenges of teaching Art in EJA, especially Music;
  - To analyze, according to EJA teachers, the real possibilities and prospects of working with Art/Music in their pedagogical practices, considering their professional training, experiences, and musical backgrounds acquired both in school and other sociocultural contexts.
- Thus, this research proposes to investigate and deepen studies on Art and, particularly, Music in the multiple and diverse context of EJA, considering this artistic and cultural language as a human manifestation expressed in different contexts, a phenomenon inherent to the human condition.

The aim is to identify elements that either enable or hinder its presence as a field of knowledge and pedagogical practice based on the work of teachers in this setting.

## **II. Methodological Approaches**

For this study, a qualitative-quantitative and bibliographic approach was considered the most appropriate, given the contributions both methodologies can offer, in addition to meeting the initially proposed objectives.

Thus, the main point lies in the alignment and coherence between the study's objectives and the approaches and procedures adopted. According to Gatti (2004, p. 4), both approaches can be seen as complementary rather than antagonistic, as they "require the researcher's effort to make sense of the collected and analyzed material." The research was conducted through a literature review, with a virtual questionnaire as the main data collection instrument, sent to Art teachers working in various public and private institutions across Minas Gerais.

The questionnaire, created on Google Forms due to its practicality and accessibility, and considering the geographically dispersed target audience, included necessary information for participants about the research, with data used strictly for academic purposes. To reach a broader audience, the questionnaire was shared and sent via targeted invitations on social networks and institutional channels related to education and the arts, with priority given to those working in EJA in public and private institutions. Sixteen Art teachers responded to the questionnaire. Despite the small number, their responses regarding their work in EJA and their educational background in the arts serve as the central focus of this study. Therefore, I relied on theoretical and methodological frameworks that contributed to the analysis of the reality in the field of EJA and the implications of Art/Music pedagogical practice by teachers in this context.

## **III. Art in EJA: Theoretical-Conceptual Considerations**

In recent years, Youth and Adult Education in Brazil has become an important educational modality aimed at combating social inequality and educational exclusion. In this sense, the school has been an important means for including young people and adults who, for various reasons, were unable to begin or continue their basic education.

**Youth and Adult Education (EJA), characterized by the diversity of its students—comprising different ages, professions, and life experiences—grants its pedagogical and curricular model greater flexibility, aiming to meet the learning needs of young people and adults.** This flexibility can be expressed through "combinations between in-person and remote teaching, in tune with students' everyday life themes, so that they can become generative elements of a relevant curriculum" (Brazil, 2000, p. 61).

The diversity that currently shapes EJA brings to mind Caliman's (2006, p. 385) words, who states that "[...] nowadays, those attending school are young people from diverse social backgrounds, each with their

personal history, which for some is regular," but for others is "marked by failures, disadvantages, discomforts, and suffering of various kinds."

Given this reality, it is assumed that teachers working in EJA, in order to effectively reach students from such diverse backgrounds, must consider a differentiated classroom space, where the boundaries between disciplines and content are blurred by social interaction and the cultural interrelations established by these individuals. As Queiroz (2011, p. 17) emphasizes, it is necessary to recognize that "each subject area has its specificities within the school education process, but all deal with people—people of different natures, thoughts, and goals, with unique experiences and access."

Di Pierro (2005) highlights the importance of EJA evolving alongside increasing sociocultural changes, with the right to education being its most important tool for democratization. Thus, the goal is not only to ensure access to consistent and quality education, but also to acknowledge young people and adults as vital agents of education. It is essential to emphasize that, in this context, education becomes indispensable for the exercise of citizenship, as well as for cultural development and critical thinking. In this regard, Paiva (2007) adds that EJA is not just a right, but a means of emancipating human development for full participation in society as citizens.

On the other hand, school dropout—one of the main problems associated with EJA, which involves students not remaining in school—should not be seen as a problem exclusive to EJA, as it affects all levels of Brazilian basic education (Canda, 2012). The author argues that, to understand the low self-esteem often observed in these students, a deeper reflection on their social conditions is necessary.

In this sense, art classes can provide favorable times and spaces for young people and adults to work on "uninhibitedness, low self-esteem, body awareness, and the cultivation of sociability" (Brazil, 2000, p. 61), as these are subjects with different levels and paces of learning, thus requiring a more attentive and sensitive approach from the teacher.

For a long time, according to Loureiro (2003), art education was limited to activities disconnected from the students' reality, preventing the development of critical thinking, questioning, or understanding of the cultural context in which they lived. In practice, school art activities often repressed students' freedom, spontaneity, and autonomy. Instead of promoting originality, imagination, and creativity, they aimed to standardize. These activities were carried out mechanically, just as tasks to be completed, ignoring the pleasure they could bring to students.

According to Loureiro (2003), what still predominates in schools is free expression, school calendar celebrations (civic and festive dates), and polyvalence as a methodological approach. Not much seems to have changed, as Subtil (2011) notes: "Even in the third millennium, there is still no clear definition of what art is, what it is for, and how artistic knowledge can be practiced in schools." The field seems to remain "a territory belonging to everyone and no one," meaning that if all subjects can work with art, then anything can be considered artistic (Subtil, 2011, p. 250).

Today, it is necessary to ask questions and reflect in order to understand: What is art for? What does it mean? What contributions does it offer to human beings? For some, art is the music they enjoy listening to, singing, or playing; it may be in dance, through free and spontaneous movements that bring joy; it may also appear in a play, where identification with a character stimulates imagination; or in a painting, appreciated for its visible and striking details. For others, defining art is difficult—it can only be felt, or perhaps it means nothing, or goes unnoticed in daily life. But it is there! Somewhere. We cannot deny it. Whether as background music in stores, supermarkets, and clinics, or in dusty, faded paintings on walls, or in sculptures and monuments throughout the city.

**Art in education, as personal expression and as culture, is an important tool for cultural identity and individual creative development.**

Through art, “it is possible to develop perception and imagination to grasp environmental reality, foster critical capacity to analyze perceived reality, and encourage creativity to transform that reality” (Barbosa, 2003, p. 18).

Nonetheless, it remains necessary to reaffirm the importance of art in the sociocultural development of citizens. Through art, in its many manifestations and forms, we have a symbolic representation of the spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional traits that define a society or social group—its way of life, system of values, traditions, and beliefs.

But what about in EJA? What place does art occupy in curricula? How is it understood and taught in the classroom? How can it be taught to older students, with vastly different life experiences, who must balance school demands with adult responsibilities? And regarding music, how can it be incorporated as a subject into the EJA curriculum? What content should be offered, and how should it be organized to broaden students' knowledge?

For this educational modality, it is crucial that the teacher's pedagogical practice is grounded in dialogue with students, identifying their interests, needs, and expectations, recognizing and valuing their existing knowledge, and building upon it with new learning. In this sense, we understand that art can be meaningful and valuable in expanding students' opportunities for critical, creative, and autonomous social and cultural participation.

We emphasize that the school environment can provide opportunities for appreciation and artistic production for EJA students, as long as they are given access to diverse artistic languages and the chance to experience aesthetic encounters—essential to knowledge construction. As Lavelberg (2006, p. 7) states, “Art is a field of knowledge that surprises when considering the education required for young people today to engage socially, culturally, and professionally.”

Art education, as part of the broader educational field, seeks to embrace this area of human knowledge in all its particularities, developing and broadening students' cultural understanding, giving them opportunities to create, admire, and reflect on art. Art teaches us to live fully through multiple forms of expressing sensations and emotions, and to find joy in life. Teaching art opens paths to learn how to read,

interpret, and reinvent the world (Ferrari, 2015). Even though the potential of art for personal and societal development is undisputed, we know that art, on its own, cannot reach everyone fairly, accessibly, and democratically. Due to personal circumstances, many individuals lack opportunities to access the cultural capital produced by humanity, and do not frequent the social and cultural environments typically associated with art—whether music, theater, visual arts, or dance (Ferrari, 2015).

According to Almeida (2001), artistic activities help students develop more flexible, less rigid thinking, enabling them to explore unexpected opportunities. These are unique learning moments that often occur in the field of the arts.

One of the most important goals of education is to foster students' autonomy, helping them become morally and intellectually independent, able to think and act on their own. In this regard, art—in its many forms—can significantly contribute, since it arguably encourages creative production more than any other subject, allowing students to move beyond pre-established models. By engaging with various artistic languages, students can develop sensitivities that enable aesthetic understanding of the world and expand their range of skills and experiences for creating ideas, involving pleasure, imagination, and expression (Almeida, 2001).

It is clear that there is a difference between art as a field of knowledge and social practice, and art education as a school process shaped by educational policies and dominant pedagogical ideas. Historically, integrating art into the school curriculum has faced challenges in both legal and practical contexts. Efforts to develop students' aesthetic sensitivity and creative expression often falter due to a lack of adequately trained teachers, poor material conditions, and a general absence of a clear concept of this knowledge area and practice (Subtil, 2011).

If we understand artistic practice as a conscious human activity filled with meaning for those who experience it, then education plays a fundamental role—especially for the majority of the population that sees school as the main tool for cultural and social inclusion. In this sense, the goal of education may be understood as “the fulfillment of the human need to comprehend, at the same time, what has been made/produced, what is being made/produced, and what can or must be made/produced” (Ribeiro, 2003, p. 29).

Considering EJA students—who, in most cases, lacked access to or continuity in formal basic education at the appropriate time—this scenario becomes even more relevant when we think about their limited exposure to artistic and cultural spaces throughout their lives.

## **I. Results and Discussion of the Data**

It was from the announced context that we considered conducting research that could contribute to understanding the reality of Art teachers when involved in Youth and Adult Education (EJA), since many of these teachers do not possess the necessary knowledge in music to work with young people and adults, which contributes to the limitation of their work development. Thus, we understand that a study with teachers working in Art in EJA will allow us to identify the particularities of their professional lives, their

perspectives on teaching practice, the challenges, and, in short, how they prepare themselves to carry out their formative role for this audience.

The research generally presents the perception of Art teachers about their practice in schools. In the questionnaire, the questions were organized according to three guiding axes that helped in the presentation and organization of the responses obtained, namely: about training in Art; about pedagogical practice in Art; and about pedagogical practice in Music within EJA.

Regarding teaching Art in EJA, such a diverse and heterogeneous context, it is almost unanimous among respondents that it is something enjoyable. It is worth noting that, among the sixteen teachers who answered the questionnaire, only one was not currently working as an Art teacher; the others, although teaching, revealed little or no inclusion of music as an artistic language in their planning; therefore, without proposals for musical activities in their pedagogical practices.

All the teachers who responded to the questionnaire are qualified in Arts, with a prevalence of specific training in Visual Arts, 50%, to the detriment of other artistic areas, possibly due to Law No. 5,692/71 (Brazil, 1971), which introduced Artistic Education into the school curriculum, establishing the practice of polyvalence in the arts—a teacher responsible for all artistic areas, one consequence of which is the superficial treatment of artistic content in schools (Figueiredo, 2011). This explains why 87.5% feel more comfortable working with visual arts (according to LDB No. 9,394/96).

Of the total teachers, two pursued a master's degree in Arts. Although most have some specialization, 43.8% stated that their training is insufficient to work with all artistic languages and, as one teacher said, "practice and experience improved me."

Regarding the development of the Arts subject in their classes, references were: theoretical and practical classes following the BNCC guidelines, practical activities, small projects, developing students' creativity. However, it is striking that one teacher stated, "the art subject is developed as an appendix. I do not see seriousness in the development of the subject." It is worth questioning: who lacks seriousness—the teacher or the student? In this sense, according to Penna (2001), the artistic field lacks conceptual and methodological depth at management levels, not only within schools but also in the sectors from which laws and legal determinations emanate.

Regarding the material resources necessary for pedagogical practice in Arts, teachers responded that they do not receive them from the school because "they are expensive," "sometimes materials are bought, requiring teacher creativity," and there was also a complaint that "the school doesn't even have an art room." Only one teacher said they receive requested materials from the school for their art practice. Therefore, it is clear that teachers are aware of the lack of materials and adequate space for the development of the subject.

Various answers were obtained regarding the integration of different artistic languages in their classes, such as: use of audiovisual resources, interdisciplinary work, music and painting, dance and culture, theater and expressions, only visual arts, lecture classes, program content, and some thematic workshops.

One teacher's response stood out: "I see no integration whatsoever. As I said, art is just an appendix." Although all teachers responded to this question and considering the particularities of their training, the responses reveal a conception of Art as merely an activity, a simple doing, an action that does not require systematic and sequential content planning, lacking defined objectives for each artistic language, and disregarding students' acquisition and progression of this knowledge.

Significantly, 87.5% of teachers stated they feel more comfortable working with Visual Arts. They consider Dance and Theater "a little complicated to teach" and that they "should be specialized." This indicates a shortage of teachers qualified to work in other areas of Art. This is confirmed when only one teacher said they work with Music, as it is their area of training.

Regarding Music in Arts education, teachers made it clear that "it is of utmost importance to work with this language because music is life; it calms, develops skills, works memory, sensitivity, and creativity." All agreed that "music is the language that brings them closer to young people, it is essential in our lives, helping us think, reflect, and develop critical awareness of the world around us." They also believe music "is important to awaken the artistic eye and the enjoyment of this art present in the daily lives of people from all social classes." Despite most perceiving that "music helps the student express themselves better, be less inhibited, brings knowledge of daily life and history, as well as social bonding," one teacher believes that "art education helps form a complete individual, but that is only discourse because public schools are far from that."

It is striking that, despite a lack of formal training in Music, most teachers recognize its relevance in the teaching-learning process, as "with music we can do various transdisciplinary activities." It should be noted here the diversity of ways in which most teachers incorporate music in their pedagogical practice. However, the use of music primarily through videos and listening with lyrics was prevalent, establishing a relationship with visual arts, "trying to adapt music with visual arts through representations with drawings, collages, etc.," as well as working with song lyrics from various genres and musical styles, "analyzing lyrics in comparison to the time they were produced." Only two teachers stated they do not work with music in their Art classes.

Considering the predominance of Visual Arts training, these teachers' conceptions reveal an understanding of Music as merely an "activity," meaning they see it as an action that does not effectively require guidance on content or the most appropriate methodology to work with artistic areas. Only one teacher emphasized the importance of a specialist in the Music area.

More than half the teachers, 68.8%, have taught or are teaching Arts in EJA and evaluate the experience as "wonderful," "great," "very expressive," "very interesting," "a unique experience." These experiences reinforce their connection to the area when one teacher states, "there are few differences from regular teaching. The only factor to consider different is age, which can impact students' pace." Among the responses, it is worth highlighting teachers' perceptions of adult students, considered "more interested in the subject and activities because they are older," "with greater interest and care in doing activities," "more

mature students willing to learn, not wanting to lose out because they already experienced school before." It is also important to point out some responses such as "difficulty getting students excited" and "the possibility of breaking paradigms with free drawing." However, one teacher's comment stands out, as in their perception, "the experience was that art comes as an appendix and the subject is not given importance."

The research sought to understand what practices teachers use to work on each artistic expression in EJA. Most frequently, activities related to Visual Arts were noted, such as coloring, painting, line drawings, geometric figures, colors, collages, making crafts using newspapers, boxes, and dough, and image reading. Among teachers, only two mentioned working with music—one using boomwhackers and the other making musical instruments using recyclable materials. The prevalence of work using Visual Arts elements indicates that each teacher works with what they know, based on their original training. It can be inferred from this reality that working with Art in EJA reveals a lack of teachers qualified to work in other areas of Art, such as Music, Dance, and Theater.

Facilitating access to the language of Music is the intention of most teachers. Although timid, this accessibility is realized through listening and appreciation of music for sensitization, reflection, and social critique, establishing dialogue with the diverse realities present in Brazilian music and culture. Among the participating teachers, two do not work with music in their Art classes, while for another, music is explored only occasionally. These responses, although revealing the importance teachers attribute to music, point to a lack of theoretical-methodological foundations for teaching that goes beyond simple, random activities disconnected from students' realities.

The research sought to identify the challenges EJA teachers face in working with Art in this context. The most common complaints were the frequency and limited weekly hours allocated to Art. However, significant challenges also include the number of students per class, the lack of infrastructure and support to carry out activities, and the shortage of qualified teachers to teach each artistic language. Notably, one teacher pointed out the challenge: "students must understand that arts is a curricular component with a vast array of knowledge to be offered through the formative journey." This statement may reveal students' lack of interest, who believe that Art "is just about coloring," a challenging factor for one teacher.

In this regard, based on what has been presented here, we agree with Paro (2001), who questions: how to lead large numbers of students to value the arts if the school they attend lacks the minimum resources for this purpose, and if they live with educators who, in their own school life and academic training, learned little or nothing about it, and whose living conditions, due to low salaries and little leisure time, permanently deprive them of contact with any artistic manifestation?

Therefore, reflecting on the data collected in the research requires a broader reflection to understand how educational policies reference Art in the school context, highlighting this curricular component in Youth and Adult Education within the current Brazilian reality.

## **I. Final Considerations**

This study aimed to reflect on the teaching of Art/Music in the context of Youth and Adult Education (EJA). The data collected through a questionnaire revealed a lack of specific training among teachers to work with all four artistic languages, an absence of a clear conception of what constitutes artistic work—often understood merely as an activity—and, consequently, a lack of direction in how art is approached, with no theoretical-methodological foundation to support it. In general terms, the research presented the perceptions of Art teachers regarding their practice in schools, especially those working with Art in EJA. The data demonstrated the fragility of the artistic field within the EJA context, marked by superficiality in both theoretical aspects and everyday pedagogical practice. Nevertheless, the commitment, effort, and good intentions shown by the teachers in fulfilling their teaching roles are acknowledged and valued. As could be observed, there are many challenges related to the pedagogical practices developed with young people and adults in the school setting of EJA. The greatest of these challenges is undoubtedly abandoning the naïve conception of education and proposing a critical way of thinking—a socially grounded way of thinking aimed at human transformation. In this sense, EJA, and indeed any type of education, would be endowed with functionality and utility, valued for its essence and uniqueness, as it would contribute to the transformation of both the individual and society.

Connecting this challenge to Art/Music in the context of EJA involves recognizing the student as someone who already possesses knowledge. Even if a student does not know how to read and write, they inevitably have musical knowledge acquired through enculturation. Therefore, it is equally essential to regard the EJA student not as an object of education but fundamentally as a subject of education.

### **References**

- ALMEIDA, Célia Maria de Castro. Conceptions and Artistic Practices in Schools. In: FERREIRA, Sueli (ed.). *The Teaching of Arts: Building Pathways*. Campinas, SP: Papirus, 2001.
- ARAÚJO, Gustavo Cunha; OLIVEIRA, Ana Arlinda. Art: A Necessary and Fruitful Dialogue in Youth and Adult Education. *EccoS – Scientific Journal*, no. 36, p. 129–142, 2015.
- (Note: Boomwhackers were first created by Craig Ramsell through his company Whacky Music in 1995. The term is now a registered trademark of Rhythm Band Instruments.)
- BARBOSA, Ana Mae. *Concerns and Changes in Art Education*. São Paulo: Cortez Editora, 2003.
- BRAZIL. Law No. 5,692, of August 11, 1971. Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education. Brasília, 1971.
- BRAZIL. Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education, No. 9,394, of December 20, 1996. Establishes the guidelines and bases of national education. Brasília: Federal Senate, 1996. Also available at: Palácio do Planalto, Presidency of the Republic.

BRAZIL. National Education Council. Resolution CNE/CEB No. 1, of July 5, 2000. Establishes the National Curriculum Guidelines for Youth and Adult Education. Brasília, CNE, 2000.

BRAZIL. Ministry of Education. National Common Curricular Base (BNCC). Brasília: MEC, 2018.

CALIMAN, Geraldo. Students at Risk and Prevention. Ensaio: Evaluation and Public Policies in Education, Rio de Janeiro, v.14, n.52, p. 383–396, Jul./Sep. 2006.

CANDA, Cilene Nascimento. Awareness and Playfulness in Youth and Adult Education: Revisiting Theoretical-Methodological Paths. Popular Education Journal, Uberlândia, v. 11, n. 1, p. 10–24, Jan./Jun. 2012.

DI PIERRO, Maria Clara. Collective Construction: Contributions to Youth and Adult Education. In: Public Policies in Youth and Adult Education: Trajectories. An Overview of the Recent Evolution of Youth and Adult Education in Brazil. Brasília: MEC/UNESCO, 2005. p. 17–59.

FERNANDES, José Nunes. Music Education for Youth and Adults in Regular Schools: Policies, Practices, and Challenges. ABEM Journal, Porto Alegre, no. 12, 2005, p. 35–41.