Pre-service primary-school educators' perceptions of the usefulness of and problems with Art Education: A case study

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Abstract

Art education has been traditionally considered as a discipline related with leisure. A case study of primary pre-service generalist educators at a Spanish university was conducted to determine whether or not this perspective has evolved. It was of interest to examine whether pre-service educators understand the way in which art education develops comprehensive and analytical skills. This study integrated both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in order to examine future teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of this subject and the problems it presents. Outcomes indicate that there is still a long way to go to transform pre-service primary generalist teachers' false perceptions related to arts teaching.

Keywords:

Art education, teacher training, primary education, case study.

Introduction

Arts practice as a discipline has historically been under-appreciated by certain sectors of the educational community. This has contributed to the proliferation of the erroneous idea that the subject of art education is inferior, offering little benefit to students' skill development. This has led to the arts being marginalized within the curriculum (Huerta & Domínguez, 2020).

Nonetheless, the teaching and learning of the arts has been proposed for centuries, citing their importance with regards to the development of creative, expressive, understanding and analytical skills, amongst others (Stankiewicz, 2007; Stankiewicz, Amburgy & Bolin, 2011). These educational streams have sought to integrate creative self-expression, theories of visual culture and discipline-based art education within classrooms and, above all, within the university ambit (Marín, 2011).

Based on that presented above, the present educational research focuses on the higher education setting with a view to uncovering the viewpoints of future generalist primary school teachers with regards to art education. Concretely, their opinions regarding the usefulness of visual arts teaching and the challenges presented to the teaching-learning process were uncovered. To this end, a case study, integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007; Stake, 2010), was conducted with a group of students from the University of Granada in Spain. The main data collection instrument was a questionnaire. This made it possible for the research to uncover whether erroneous beliefs related to art education persist in individuals who will be charged with delivering this subject in the future or, in contrast, whether higher education is meeting the task of reinforcing this type of teaching thanks to the aforementioned educational proposals.

Background

As indicated by Marín (2011), teaching methods pertaining to the visual arts have notably changed over the course of time. Teaching drawing was embedded in the school curriculum at the beginning of the 19th century. At this time, it was based on teaching artistic and technical drawing through copying illustrations. However, it was not until the 20th century that the first theories of children's drawing started were developed. This affected the way in which art education was delivered and incorporated considerations about spontaneous development in art learning. In the 20th century, schools were already developing various approaches to teaching art. These included creative self-expression, which placed a focus on artistic processes, theories of visual culture and discipline-based art education. The aforementioned theories promoted the creation of a critical voice in students, whilst discipline-based art education sought to target the four actions of individuals in relation to art: create it, appreciate its qualities, discover its place in culture and in time, and state and justify their beliefs about its nature, merits and importance (Eisner, 2002). Future primary school teachers should, in

short, know all of these approaches and be able to value and deliver arts teaching given the skills and abilities that it helps to develop. Research exists that has specifically focused on improving the training of teachers based on that discussed above. One such research study was conducted by Martínez, Botella and Fernández (2014). This study points to a curricular vacuum regarding art subjects, urging for this to be addressed in degree study plans. Based on this idea, an innovative training proposal was presented in order to develop the expressive skills of future teachers.

In this same sense, the book '*Nuevas propuestas de acción en educación artística [new action proposals in art education]'* (Martínez, Gutiérrez y Escaño, 2008) compiles reflections made by some of the most important researchers in the field of Didactics of Artistic Expression in Spain about the university training of future teachers. A particularly relevant reflection is made in the chapter written by Gutiérrez Pérez (2008), who asks "what degree of specialization is needed in teacher training to be able to tackle [...] teaching and learning processes linked with art education" (p. 25)

Upon review of examinations focused on the opinions of future students about visual art subjects, one of the first precedents was set by a survey conducted in 1979 with six hundred visual arts teachers. This explored, amongst other things, the personal perceptions of teachers about their role as artists/teachers (Chapman, 1979).

A large number of articles presenting the opinions of educational agents have been produced in Australia. This country has developed a strong production line of research around the perceptions of art subjects. Garvis is one of the main researchers in this sphere. Their 2009 study is of particular relevance as the term *"self-efficacy"* appears repeatedly. This term, conceived by Bandura (1997), refers to the beliefs held by individuals about their own abilities. It refers to the perceptions held by human beings about their "capacity to organize and execute the action sequences required to obtain a previously defined objective" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Garvis sought to delve deeper into students' perceptions of self-efficacy at the time of undertaking art education. To this end, a survey was conducted of fifteen future teachers who had received university training. From this, it was concluded that, although trainee students' perceptions of self-efficacy were high, self-efficacy decreased when they were practicing their profession. This resulted in the subject being under-valued and marginalized from the curriculum when it came to distributing classroom time.

Along the same lines, Garvis and Pendergast (2010) examined practicing teachers who had a maximum of three years experience. This research study was focused on a specific aspect of art education, namely, the support received by teachers from their schools. Participating teachers completed a questionnaire in which they rated the support offered by schools to the arts and then explained their ratings. Those surveyed agreed that there existed a general lack of protection for the arts from academic centers, whilst subjects such as English and mathematics were perceived as

receiving the most support. Amongst the reasons given for this relative neglect, under-valuation of the arts by the administrative staff at schools stood out most.

Another notable study was conducted by Russell-Bowie in 2010 with a sample composed of future teachers from Australia, Namibia, South Africa, the USA and Ireland. The aim of this work was to delve deeper into the perceptions held by future teachers in these examined countries in relation to art subjects. The main research tool employed was a survey. Survey responses indicated that only a few participants believed themselves to have good knowledge about the visual arts, whether this was acquired through social, cultural or formal routes. The majority of those surveyed stated that neither themselves nor their families were engaged in art-related activities and that they had not received much formal training in this respect. Russell-Bowie concluded that art subjects were in danger of being removed from the curriculum in favor of other disciplines such as literature or mathematics.

Another research work framed within the Australian context was published by Lummis, Morris and Paolino (2014). This study was initiated following the full inclusion of art education on the Australian National Curriculum. As a consequence, it was necessary to examine whether future teachers were capable of putting the principles outlined by this aforementioned curriculum into practice. The sample was composed of future primary school teachers who were undertaking their first or last year of university education. The research was interested in comparing the teaching capacities of both of these groups. Once again, the measurement tool used was a survey. Researchers concluded that, when asked, students had few art experiences to draw on prior to their university education. Nonetheless, when they had lived such experiences, for example, during their period of compulsory education, these experiences had exerted a positive influence on their thoughts with respect to art subjects. Researchers highlighted the need for self-efficacy to be strengthened in final year students.

Moving away from the Australian context, an interesting investigation explored the perceptions of members of the educational community in Bogota, Colombia with regards to art education (Plata, 2010). This study was set in the ambit of primary education and its sample was constituted by different educational agents: school directors, practicing teachers, students, etc. Plata used a questionnaire based on open questions in order to enable a freer examination of the motivations, attitudes and opinions of participants involved in the research. These authors concluded that very little value was given to art education by participating members of the educational community. Art-related subjects were seen to be disjointed from other knowledge areas and suffered from a lack of resources and appropriate spaces for development. Art was perceived as a filler subject, despite it being defined as a dynamic "reinforcer of critical and reflective thinking, the flow of ideas, curiosity, imagination and self-determination within a group or in the community" (Plata, 2010, p. 9).

More recently, a doctoral thesis written by Lim (2017) at Indiana University shifts the focus, specifically, to the lack of research on the training received by visual arts teachers and their preparation as teachers of art. More literature exists with regards to the preparation of generalist teachers but becomes much scarcer when we focus on the specific context of art training. In the same way, not many studies are found to have examined training by directly approaching future teachers via a questionnaire.

Finally, it serves to mention a study carried out in Spain with a sample of 131 trainee teachers. These teachers were undertaking their first teaching degree had not yet received specific training in relation to the arts (Salgado, 2013). This research was focused on the interest shown by future teachers into art learning, in addition to the perceived usefulness of this type of learning. For this, a questionnaire was administered which, following its analysis, produced the following conclusions:

- Participants showed an indifferent attitude towards the subject of visual arts with a slight tendency towards rating it positively.

- Participants had the feeling that it was a less important discipline than others with a greater curricular presence.

- Many defined it as an entertaining subject but felt it demanded minimal effort. It was considered to be a *hobby,* classed as "fun, individual, simple" (p. 286).

- The majority of those surveyed did not believe that this subject could be used transversally with other subjects or as a current form of global knowledge, however, they recognized its usefulness for expressing feelings and emotions.

- The majority of those surveyed did not identify with the statement that what was learned through art did not serve for anything or had no utility outside of the classroom.

In view of these results, Salgado considered that it was necessary to "equip future teachers with enough information and knowledge [to guide] positive change towards teaching the subject, with the aim of raising their awareness about its importance" (p. 286).

All of the aforementioned studies are of huge interest since their findings provide a peek into the state of arts teaching through the lens of those charged with delivering it. This has provided responses to questions surrounding the role and purpose attributed to it by teachers, its impact on self-efficacy and the support it is observed to receive, in addition to teachers' own knowledge of the subject, etc. In line with this prior research and in response to the scarcity of relevant research in Spain, the present study sought to examine the perspectives of a group of future generalist primary school teachers with regards to arts teaching. In consideration of the fact that teacher training offers a strategy for addressing tendencies towards underestimating the importance of learning through visual arts, it is

foreseen that the present study will enable us to determine whether or not the teachers of the future are equipped to eradicate erroneous ideas pertaining to visual arts teaching.

Method

In consideration of that mentioned above, a study was carried out that integrated qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The research was performed at the Faculty of Educational Sciences at the University of Granada, Spain and the main examination method used was a questionnaire made up of open questions. The sample constituted 88 first-year students undertaking the Primary Education degree.

Objectives

The present study frames two specific objectives with respect to future primary school generalist teachers:

- Identify teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of art education.
- Explore the problems identified by teachers with regards to art education.

Design and Procedure

As previously indicated, the present research pertains to a case study which was designed based on a mixed model which integrated qualitative and quantitative methods (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). In order to carry out this examination procedure, a questionnaire was administered which included the following questions:

- Do you think that art education is useful? Why?
- What problems do you think art education has?

The questionnaire was administered individually and comprised open questions (Rodríguez, Gil and García, 1999) so that all those surveyed could freely express themselves according to their own language and without limiting the length of responses. Once responses were obtained, the following procedure was followed to analyze responses.

Firstly, the **qualitative technique of semantic content analysis** was employed. This identifies the meaning of words in order to examine and define categories (Sánchez-Gómez et al., 2017). This procedure was used to group responses as a function of their similarity or relatedness. This important analytical task permitted a series of responses types to be deduced in relation to each of the formulated questions. This process was conducted on two occasions and was blinded, with various days lapsing between the first and second rounds of classification. This type of approach minimizes the margin of error with regards to the interpretation of obtained responses.

Following this, **the outcomes obtained for each response were converted into quantitative percentages.** This enabled the identification of existing trends and generated a visual representation of data via infographics. Percentages were calculated with respect to responses given overall within each group. In other words, unanswered questions were recorded in the same way as questions to which the same respondent provided various responses. The latter of these were classified according to more than one category. This process, in general, permitted use to identify the ways of thinking shared by surveyed students and uncover the most common responses.

Finally, **a qualitative analysis** was conducted of each of the responses. This analysis is reported in the discussion and conclusions section of the present article. This enabled us to make conclusions around the feelings held by future teachers as a group. From these data, theory was generated through a **non-mathematical interpretation process**. This was carried out with the aim of discovering concepts and relationships and organizing these according to explanatory theoretical frameworks (Osses el al., 2006).

Participants

The present study was conducted in the Faculty of Educational Sciences at the University of Granada, Spain with a sample composed of 88 students undertaking the first year of the Primary Education Degree. The sample was formed by 46 women and 42 men, all of which were White and had an average age of 20 years. All participants provided explicit consent for their participation in the research, however, given that no repercussions were envisaged on health, privacy or any other ethical issue, current legislation in Andalusia, Spain does not consider certification of a human research ethical committee to be mandatory.

With regards to the Primary Education degree being undertaken by participants, it covers all university training required in Spain to exercise professionally as a teacher at this educational stage. In concerns a generalist and multi-disciplinary type of training which lasts for a total of four years.

At the time of the study, participants in the present research had already finished the subject denominated "teaching and learning of visual and plastic arts", meaning that they possessed knowledge related with the subject of art education. This is accredited in the subject's *Teaching Guide* (UGR, 2018), in which the development of skills is specified as:

- Knowledge of the teaching and learning processes applicable to the subject of visual education.
- Knowledge of visual arts teaching models.
- Capacity to understand and use artistic forms and language as singular manifestations of knowledge.

■ The strengthening of critical analysis and planning skills in order to relate visual contents with other subjects.

The participating sample is, therefore, composed of individuals who will be artistic education teachers in Primary Education in Spain in the near future. Further, it is formed from a group that has received training and, for this reason, a high level of knowledge is assumed with regards to the usefulness of and issues implicit to the visual arts. All of these characteristics will permit us to identify whether they are equipped to break with the educational taboos and routines that have taken root in arts teaching. If the aim is for future Primary Education students to receive quality artistic education, it is necessary for the person charged with transmitting these teachings to understand the usefulness of the subject and its issues.

Results

Next, responses given by future teachers to the two posed questions will be presented. These responses were grouped and categorized through semantic content analysis and the obtained outcomes were converted into quantitative percentages.

Research Question 1: Do you think that art education is useful? Why?

All participating future primary school teachers considered art education to be useful. With regards to the explanations given for this response, seven types of reasoning or arguments were uncovered.

Figure 1.

Responses given by future teachers to the first question.
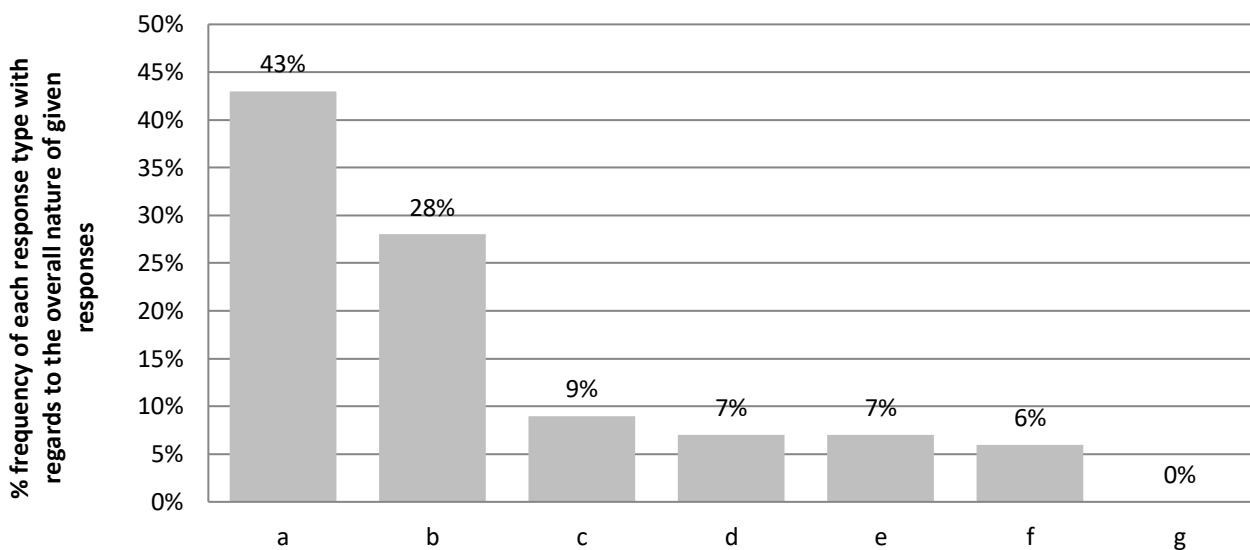
Source: Own elaboration (2021)

a) **art education is useful because it develops imagination, expression and creativity.** According to this line of argument, learning art promotes sensitivity for creation and aesthetic perception. Art is a form of manifestation that enables human beings to self-express and indirectly experience reality through the work of third parties. As we can see in figure 1, this conception of the subject of art education was the most shared idea amongst examined future teachers (43% of responses given to this question).

b) **art education is useful because it offers new viewpoints and contributes to the personal and cultural development of individuals.** This response grouped together those participants who reported that knowledge acquisition, with regards to art history, artwork, and our capacity to both understand and analyze it, contributes to an individuals' personal and cultural development. For these future teachers, art is a fundamental human process which has served as a type of expression within all social groups throughout history (Lowenfeld and Lambert, 1987). This was the second most common response type (28% of responses given to this question) and was expressed in statements such as: "art education allows you to understand and enjoy things which, without this type of training, you would not understand", "it offers new perspectives on art and reality", "it develops our art knowledge", "it serves to know ourselves and the world that surrounds us better", etc.

c) **art education is useful because it serves as entertainment.** According to this argument, art education is valuable because it concerns a light subject, which helps to avoid problems and serves as entertainment for students. Amongst the responses given by future teachers (9% of responses given to this question), statements emerged such as: "art education helps individuals entertain themselves and temporarily leave behind the problems of their social setting", "it is a subject that breaks with monotony", "it offers more enjoyable content", "it is a way of relaxing and disconnecting", "it is light relative to heavier subjects" and "it is a nice way to pass time".

d) **art education is useful because it develops the capacity to solve problems and contributes to the intellectual development of individuals.** Future teachers giving this type of response (7% of responses given to this question) touched on ideas espoused by the educational model proposed by Dewey (2005), according to which arts teaching contributes to cognitive development. In research participants own words, art education "contributes to making us more capable of resolving our own day-to-day problems", "develops the artistic and intellectual potential of individuals, motivating them and making them better themselves", "teaches them to be better than they think they can be", "develops individuals at an intellectual level", "gives importance to the process and not only the outcome", etc.

e) **art education is useful because it improves artistic techniques.** This type of response is related with that denominated by Eisner (2005) as "productive capacity", or the aptitude or ability to

create artistic shapes. Future teachers offering this type of response (7% of responses given to this question) described art learning as an eminently practical activity which is destined to the construction of objects, learning of a determined technique or trade, etc. From this perspective, students of art subjects are considered more as "producers of objects [...] active builders of critical knowledge that can be transferred to other situations and circumstances, which are not necessarily artistic" (Hernández, 1995, p. 24).

f)   **art education is useful because it develops evaluation capacity and opinion.** According to this type of response, art education provides visual culture and equips human beings with the knowledge required to uncover the hidden meaning of images, in this way developing their critical capacity (6% of responses given to this question). This response is linked with a curricular perspective, in accordance with which students should be exposed to "not only formal, conceptual and practical knowledge in relation to the arts but, also, its consideration as a part of the visual culture of different towns and societies" (Hernández, 2000, p. 45). Thanks to this type of training, students learn how to "read between the lines", interpreting the messages that are found "below the surface" (Eisner, 2002). This type of response is encapsulated by statements such as: "it is important to have knowledge about visual culture in order to use the correct judgement when understanding and evaluating images", "art education teaches us to be critical", "it helps us to see the world in a different way", "it promotes a broader way of thinking" and "it helps human beings to think for themselves".

g)   **Unanswered question.** This first question was responded to by all study participants.

Research Question 2: What problems do you think art education has?

Responses given to this second question gave rise to a huge variety of arguments or statements. Concretely, semantic content analysis enabled us to establish 9 response or statement types. Likewise, response proportions pertaining to this question were fairly dispersed, with no predominant response type emerging, in the same way as seen in relation to question one.

a)   **Lack of social value.** This was the most frequently mentioned problem (27% of responses given to this question), although other topics were also mentioned almost as frequently. Future teachers who referred to the lack of value attributed to the subject of art education made statements such as "ignorance brings with it a society that thinks that art education can be summarized as crafts", "it is a problem that people think that it is an easy subject in which the only thing you do is play", "that it is related with not doing anything or wasting time", "that it is considered to be a lesser subject on the school curriculum", etc. Likewise, participants who showed this type of reasoning considered it necessary to overcome the popular belief that visual arts pertain to a subject that lacks importance, is recreational or, simply, a waste of time.

b) Difficulties caused by the lack of talent on behalf of students. A large proportion of the future students surveyed (20% of responses given to this question) considered that lack of student talent was an additional complication at the time of delivering subjects related to art education. Some even argued that the lack of talent could get to the point of being a cause of frustration amongst future students. Within this response type, we find statements such as "the child cannot feel bad when faced with the possibility of not achieving the desired outcome", "the subject is limited by student talent", "it can be difficult to take on for those students who do not know how to draw", "it is a subject that challenges children who are not creative", "it partly depends on the innate talent of individuals", etc.

c) Problems related to organization of the curriculum or teaching of the subject. This was the third most popular response (19% of responses to this question). Within this response type, arguments were grouped together that pertained to the subject's lack of importance to the educational curriculum, teacher's lack of freedom and, to a lesser extent, the absence of transversal activities within art education and other subjects.

d) Subject ambiguity and subjectivity. A considerable percentage of research participants (14% of responses given to this question) described art education as an overly ambiguous or subjective subject. According to participants, teaching this subject could generate problems due to its excessive lack of precision or vagueness due to the fact that it concerns a type of information that is not only intellectual but, also, contains an important emotional and human facet.

e) The emergence of new technologies. According to the future teachers who provided this response type (6% of responses given to this question), the emergence of new technology was seen to potentially promote carelessness in the teaching of traditional arts. At the same time, this was judged to bring about the consequence of imagination in the classroom being stilted.

f) The large time and/or material investment required. This response was given by an important percentage of participants (5% of responses given to this question). These future teachers mentioned the fact that art education generated a lot of work due to the fact that an excessive amount of time must be dedicated to it and it also requires huge investment into school materials.

g) Lack of specialization or knowledge of teachers. This response type (2% of responses given to this question) is encapsulated by statements such as "the problem with art education is the existence of teachers who are little qualified to deliver this type of teaching", "the fact that teaching is not performed in the way in which it should be", "the uselessness of the subject if it is not well delivered by the teacher", etc.

h) Lack of orientation of the subject towards the acquisition of visual culture. According to the future teachers who offered this type of reasoning (1% of responses given to this question), in an

era framed by the hegemony of publicity and the mass media, the essential acquisition of greater visual culture by children is not being taken care of.

i)   Unanswered question. This second question was not responded to by a meaningful percentage of study participants (6% of the response types pertaining to this question).

Figure 2

Responses given by future teachers to the second question.
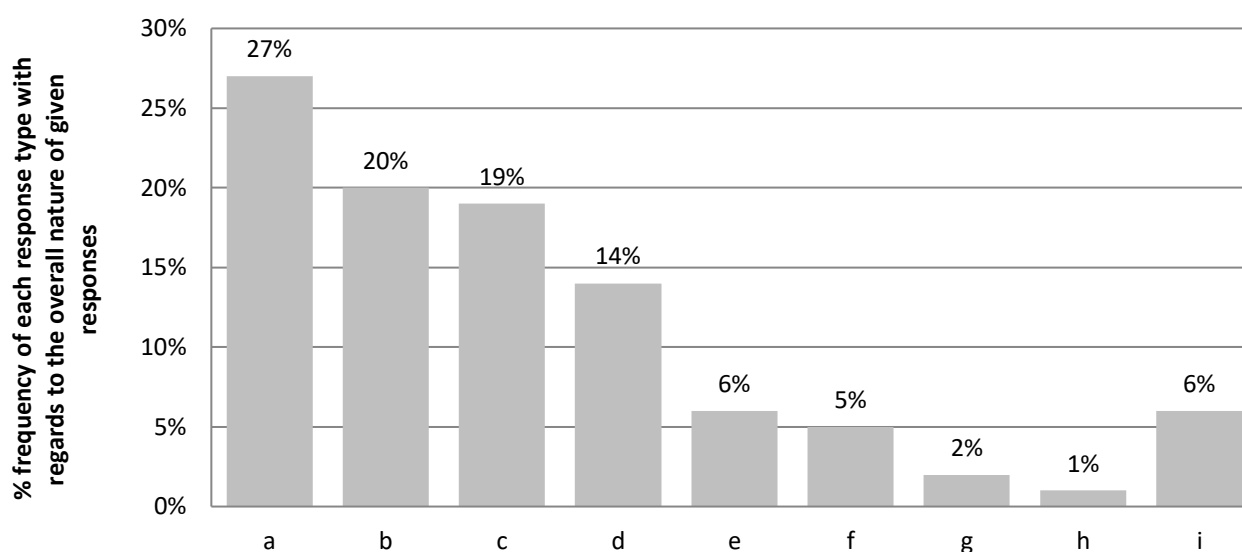
Source: Own elaboration (2021)

Discussion and Conclusions

Now that the quantitative outcomes of the present study have been described, we will proceed to present the qualitative analysis conducted of the same data via **non-mathematical interpretation** processes (Osses el al., 2006). This analysis was conducted for the two questions posed on the questionnaire.

Pre-service primary-school educators' perceptions of the usefulness of art education

With regards to the first question on the questionnaire, all of the future teachers surveyed considered art education to be useful, with the subject generally being valued highly positively. Moving on to analyze the reasons given to explain this usefulness, the first explanation is seen through the large percentage of participants who reported that art education developed imagination, expression and

creativity (response a). This explanation was given by more future teachers than the explanation that it improved artistic technique (response e). This means that future teachers participating in the present research knew to rate the expressive function of education above its practical facet. In the same way, it was also positive that the second most common consideration in relation to the usefulness of the subject was its contribution to the personal and cultural development of the human being (response b).

In contrast, few arguments were made that referred to the usefulness of the arts as a tool for developing qualitative intelligence (response c). Considering that visual learning makes an essential contribution to cognitive development, it is paradoxical that future teachers do not associate art knowledge with complex ways of thinking. This could have the consequence that, in the future, many teachers will still not understand that approaching a creative process puts the same mental mechanisms (linguistic, mathematical, scientific, etc.) into play as those used to resolve other types of problems (Eisner, 2002).

All of these conclusions coincide with conclusions previously reported by Salgado (2013) in their study named "perceptions of teachers in initial training of the value of art". This author made the following statement when referring to the type of learnings attributed by future teachers to art teaching:

> "They do not agree with the statements that 'what is learnt in art does not serve for anything' or that 'what one learns in art is of no use whatsoever outside of the classroom', however, when different uses of the subject are proposed to them, such as its use in other subjects or for knowing the world as it is, they do not value it. In contrast, they do recognize its usefulness for expressing feelings and emotions, something that is normally transmitted in classrooms" (Salgado, 2013, p. 286).

Nonetheless, of most concern with respect to the first question on the questionnaire is that certain participants considered art education to be a subject geared towards entertaining students (response e). Whilst it is true that this response was given by only a minority of participants, it is an argument that should be eradicated from educational sciences faculties. It is not the intention to give the idea that the subject of art education is not or cannot be pleasant but, in no case, should this be its main purpose. In contrast, fun should be paired with effort and learning, with this constituting the main purpose of any school subject. According to a study conducted by Salgado (2013, p. 286), teachers understand that art education is "an entertaining subject but one that lacks value, demands minimum effort, [is defined as a] *hobby,* […] fun, personal, simple […] but not one of the essential subjects."

According to the last response given to the first question on the questionnaire, the usefulness of art learning resides in its capacity to develop our critical sense, allowing us to analyze the intentionality

or veracity of visual messages (response f). Taking into consideration the fact that we are immersed in an "image society", within which visual manifestations mold our values, attitudes and thoughts (Marín, 2011), the usefulness of art education should be much more evident for future teachers. Only in this way will it be possible to ensure that visual culture constitutes a central axis of this school subject.

Pre-service primary-school educators' perceptions of problems inherent to art education

Some alarming statements were found with regards to the responses given to the second question on the questionnaire. For example, in accordance with the second most commonly given response, one of the problems of art education was seen to be related to the difficulties derived from the lack of student talent (response b). This is an incredibly unfortunate argument that should not be made by any budding primary school teacher. Based on this response, it can be deduced that study participants are unaware that it is not necessary to be an especially talented artist in order to extract useful knowledge from art learning. It can be said, therefore, that too many future teachers made this type of reflection.

Likewise, certain responses that referred to the ambiguity and subjectivity of the subject are also of concern (response d), as were comments pertaining to the large time investment and materials assumed to be needed (response e). If we stay with the first of these arguments, we can deduce that some of the surveyed future teachers preferred to stick to practical-technical teachings of art education, limiting the subject to a purely formal learning context. In this sense, the expressive, analytical, critical or reflective facet of the subject presents an issue. Thus, it is evident that art teaching is not like mathematics (or indeed like any other of the exact sciences) as it does not give closed and unequivocal solutions. Nonetheless, the richness of the subject and its contribution to the development of quantitative intelligence and reasoning capacity comes, precisely, from the subject's versatility.

All of the prior responses, in addition to unanswered questions, constitute practically half of the responses given to the second question on the questionnaire. From all of this, it is possible to deduce that a large section of the surveyed future teachers did not appear to be equipped to make use of the subject's expressive, analytical, critical or reflective facet, with this being seen as the problem of having to overcome a supposed lack of talent on behalf of future students.

In contrast to that presented above, it is also possible to observe that the most mentioned issue with regards to art was, logically, its lack of social value (response a). This is, undoubtedly, the most obvious argument and, probably as a result, the most popular (although it was only given slightly more than the other responses were given). In the same way, this social undervaluing constitutes an

objective fact and a problem that traditionally must be overcome in art teaching. It is, therefore, convenient that future teachers were able to see this problem as this is the only way in which it will be able to be dealt with in the future. Likewise, the fact that responses repeatedly alluded to the need to overcome or break this type of popular belief is also positive. Further, it is also considered beneficial to the subject of art education that future teachers showed concern for issues involving curricular organization such as, for example, the decrease in the number of teaching hours dedicated to this subject (response c).

Other observations given by participants, although less often, included the lack of specialization of teachers at the time of imparting art education (response g) and lack of orientation of the subject towards content related to visual culture (response h). With regards to the first of these reflections, responses given by study participants coincide with some of the conclusions extracted by researchers working in the Australian context (whose work was mentioned in the background section of the present article). In some way, it could be understood that future teachers who make this type of reflection are calling for a higher level of training.

Finally, with regards to the mention of new technology as a problem faced by art education, this statement seems far removed from reality. Nonetheless, its emergence is hugely interesting to the extent that it opens up debate around contemporary reality.

Reach and limitations

Based on examination of obtained outcomes, it can be said that the present research met its objective of identifying future teachers' perceptions around the usefulness of art education and its related challenges. Likewise, the mixed model integrating qualitative and quantitative methods enabled understanding of the research issue by facilitating quantitative data, through content analysis, and, later, interpreting these data to reach conclusions (Sánchez-Gómez et al., 2018).

This being said, there is still a long way to go for higher education to fulfill its duty of tackling underestimations of the importance of visual arts learning. It seems obvious that thoughts such as those which relate the teaching of this discipline with entertainment or perceptions of a lack of student talent should first be eradicated. Thus, certain steps could be taken to improve teacher training.

One of these steps could be to increase the teaching time given to art education didactic modules included in the Primary Education degree with the aim of more broadly developing the teaching skills of future teachers. In the same way, delivering courses on art integration would also be helpful. This latter suggestion would also permit future teachers to understand that visual arts subjects can be effective vehicles for transmitting any type of knowledge by placing value on the analytical, reflective and critical potential of the subject.

In conclusion, it is important to state that we are convinced that directly questioning future teachers was an effective way of understanding their thoughts about art education, whilst also enabling the indirect evaluation of the training they receive. Nonetheless, it should not be ignored that the present research also had a number of limitations. Firstly, we believe that it would be useful to broaden the investigated sample with the aim of obtaining more representative data. This will enable us to conduct a more accurate and meaningful statistical analysis. Secondly, we identified a lack of prior research related with the present research. This, without a doubt, limits the reach of the present study. However, at the same time, it presents us with the opportunity to open up new lines of research in our country which, in a similar way to that seen in the Australian context, is interested in examining the views held by future teachers about art education. Further investigation in this field would enable the training shortcomings that permit false beliefs to be perpetuated around art teaching to be identified.

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