

# Action research with John Dewey's poetic and rhetoric pedagogy

*Erika Natacha Fernandes de Andrade and  
Marcus Vinicius da Cunha*

## **Abstract**

In this article, we describe action research to test the hypothesis that the comprehension of John Dewey's philosophical and educational conceptions can help teachers to construct significant possibilities in teaching artistic languages and forming creative subjects. We consider that Dewey was a precursor of action research as a method for the constitution of the knowledge in the humanities, especially in education, and that the core of his ideas lies in an aesthetic theory. For this reason, his pedagogy can be called poetics, or rhetoric. So, we developed action research with a group of university students from a teacher training course, taking music as an object of reflection and articulation of practical activities. The theme of this experience was the Baião, Brazilian musical genre, chosen as an expressive way to produce aesthetic, rhetorical and poetic experiences. The results emphasise the potential of musical language to promote the association between aesthetic concepts and the Deweyan educational propositions, in order to provide aesthetic appreciation experiences and to foster the constitution of individuals aware of their potential.

**Key words:** John Dewey, art, education, music, rhetoric

## **Una investigación-acción con la pedagogía poética y retórica de John Dewey**

### **Resumen**

En este artículo relacionamos una investigación-acción para probar la hipótesis de que la comprensión de las concepciones filosóficas y educativas de John Dewey puede ayudar a los profesores a construir posibilidades significativas en la enseñanza de los lenguajes artísticos y en la formación de temas creativos. Consideramos que Dewey fue un precursor de la investigación-acción como método para la construcción de conocimiento en las humanidades, especialmente en la educación, y que el núcleo de sus ideas se encuentra en una teoría estética. Por esta razón, su pedagogía puede ser llamada como poética, o retórica. Así, desarrollamos una investigación-acción con un grupo de estudiantes universitarios de un curso de formación de profesores, tomando la música como objeto de reflexión y articulación de actividades prácticas. El tema de esta experiencia fue el Baião, un género musical brasileño elegido como una forma expresiva de producir experiencias estéticas, retóricas y poéticas. Los resultados enfatizan el potencial del lenguaje musical para promover la asociación entre conceptos estéticos y proposiciones educativas de Dewey, con el fin de proporcionar experiencias de consumación estética y promover la constitución de identidades conscientes de sus potencialidades.

**Palabras clave:** John Dewey, arte, educación, música, retórica

## Introduction

Tripp (2005) reports that there are several types of research which seek to integrate actions performed in practical situations with the search for knowledge about the reality in which such actions take place. The general procedure consists in identifying a problem, formulating hypotheses, planning solutions, producing interventions, and finally monitoring and evaluating such interventions, always aiming to achieve objective improvements in a given reality, the increase of knowledge about the practice investigated, and also about research. The presentation of the method called *action research*, which is attributed to Kurt Lewin, includes theoretical studies and research techniques validated by scientific communities, not only aiming at knowledge of the reality studied academically, but also to transform the current situation through actions that are continually problematised and evaluated.

Action research and other similar forms of research have been highly valued and used in the human sciences, especially in education, because in contrast to the usual methods, they promote conscious, intentional, dialogical and innovative actions, capable of contributing to the realisation of democratic ideals, and also to the possibility of improving the quality of teaching work, and the re-elaboration of the individual and social life of all those involved in the pedagogical process. Despite Lewin being the creator of this method in the 1940s, it may be said that other thinkers and researchers have previously adopted principles of argumentative and active *práxis*, and even methods that combined investigative and reflexive reasoning, research, mobilisation, and action; further studies have expanded the foundations of action research, causing proposals for the training of professionals, notably reflective teachers, and contributing to the emergence of new academic approaches that argue that action is essential (André 2001; Tripp 2005; Silva 2008; Rocha et al. 2016).

It is possible to place the American philosopher and educator John Dewey (1859-1952) as a precursor of action research, as a defender of the relevance of this method to the constitution of the knowledge in the humanities. What supports this statement is the Deweyan concept of *reflexive thinking*, or *inquiry*, whose definition includes a general procedure that is very similar to action research. Dewey characterises reflexive thinking as a tool to guide everyday life, as well as guiding the complex formulations of science: it is from a significant problem that the individual seeks a solution, which involves raising information: theoretical, experiential, technological, historical, etc., to reason and articulate hypotheses that answer the initial question, to choose a course of action, and finally, to evaluate the effectiveness of the chosen hypothesis. The process of investigation is completed with the formation of a judgment, which is a moral judgment about the solution of the problem, and can be systematised for the elaboration of theoretical speculations. The solution is never definitive, because in the face of a new problem, albeit similar to the previous one, a new investigation should be initiated. (Cunha 2005).

Considering Dewey's conceptions and procedures, we developed action research to test, in a practical way, the hypothesis that the comprehension of Deweyan principles related to the artistic development are able to help teachers to construct significant possibilities in the teaching of artistic languages and to form creative, expressive subjects, participants in the culture. The choice of artistic languages as the subject of this research was based on the thesis that the core of Deweyan ideas lies in an aesthetic theory, which originates a ped-

agogy that we call *poetics*, or *rhetoric*. The first section of this article will be devoted to substantiating this thesis.

The second section will focus on the organisation of the action research, which was done with a group of 23 university students between the ages of 18 and 25 from a teacher training course taught at University of São Paulo, Ribeirão Preto, Brazil, that aims to empower them to teach children between 0 and 10 years of age, and to act in school management. The work took place in ten three-hour-long daily formative meetings focusing on art as theme, using the Brazilian musical genre named *Baião* as a mean to provoke aesthetic experiences. There is no exact information about the origin of this musical genre, but it is known that it was created in the Northeastern backlands and that the *Lundu*, popular Afro-Brazilian rhythm of the eighteenth century, is one of its earliest ancestors. The *Baião* came together with the diffusion of *Lundu* and other musical languages linked to festivals, dances and religious or profane rites. In this tradition, the most important musicians are Luiz Gonzaga, composer, singer and accordionist born in the state of Pernambuco, and Humberto Teixeira, a composer born in the state of Ceará. In the 1940s, both were responsible for styling, marketing and disseminating the *Baião* in other regions of Brazil, so that their work is still valued and respected, being currently alive in various media (Moraes 2013; Tatit 2014).

Our choice could have fallen on another musical genre, without prejudice to our goal: to promote the emergence of expressive forms through aesthetic experiences. Since *Baião* is present in other Brazilian rhythms very widespread among the young, we considered that this choice would facilitate the students' performance in the formative meetings. Besides that, the Brazilian curricula of Basic Education are governed by an official document that determines the compulsory teaching of art and the valuation of regional cultures (Brasil, 2010).<sup>1</sup> For expressing the cultural roots of Northeastern people, *Baião* is often indicated as content in the education of children and adolescents.

## Dewey's poetic and rhetorical pedagogy

Dewey's educational propositions can be qualified as **poetic**: in allusion to the Greek term *poiesi*, because they seek to legitimise creative and imaginative actions arising from the significance of reality, and raise new passions, mobilisations and changes of behaviour. Such propositions belong to a wide rhetorical tradition originated with the Sophists, to whom the domain of the *logos* attributes power to (re)create mental states and social conditions. The goal of rhetorical education is to develop people with power of expression, capable to take part equally in public spaces, capable of composing their individualities in tune with the reformulation of community values inseparable from personal happiness (Crick, 2015).

Poetic creations express, in the proper moment and in a thoughtful way, what is, or can be, fair, ethical, adequate, and civic, and because of this they touch human passions more closely, mobilise thinking and intelligent action, in order to persuade individuals and groups that there are possibilities and meanings beyond those already experienced. The linguistic habit allows the domain of symbolic systems and linguistic techniques, promoting

1 Basic Education serves children, adolescents and young people between the ages of zero and 18 years, and also adults who did not attend school at regular age.

the development of the willingness to debate and enunciate; therefore, it allows individuals to elaborate their own experiences meaningfully and consciously. As the basis for social and internal communicative acts, linguistic habit favours the strengthening of the self, which feels increasingly capable, holder of the power to investigate, discuss, have an opinion and poetise (Poulakos 1995; Kinneavy 2002; Ericsson 2003).

Dewey's reflections (1964a, p. 145) on aesthetics and art show that the expansive and liberating power of artistic languages promotes the link between the formation of individualities with poetic-reflexive capability and the creation of democratic ways of life; because they motivate symbolisations and statements full of autonomy, the arts constitute the main language of education, making the processes of artistic reasoning become a model for philosophical thought. In addition to clarifying the principles that underlie the experiences which are truly capable of promoting the artistic development of the human being, Dewey's discourse reveals that it is in the realm of the arts that poetic and rhetorical educational experiences can be better implemented (Dewey 2005).

For Dewey (2005 p. 169), "an aesthetic experience"; as well as "the work of art in its actuality", is "perception", a "full perception and its correlative, an object or event" is "accompanied by, or rather consists in, the release of energy in its purest form": "one that is organised and so rhythmic" (Dewey 2005, p. 184). Rhythm is an indispensable condition for life and for the elaboration of forms, natural and cultural, because in rhythmic processes the opposite energies are considered, not discarded, causing the generation of more energy, organised and balanced energy that culminates in the expansion or evolution of the whole. Therefore, an experience is aesthetic, a production is truly artistic, when the energies "became a rhythm in experience itself", transforming or expanding the own being (Dewey 2005, p. 169).

The Deweyan discourse expresses a concept that can be called *rhythmic aesthetic experience*. Both in the artistic practice and in the appreciation of artistic productions, it is essential to mobilise the emotions and to value the tensions in favour of the experience as a whole, as happens in the rhythmic movements: all means, materials, emotions, perceptions, etc., are experienced antagonistically in the process of noticing and/or doing, are taken as relevant elements that, exchanged and reorganised, provide the format of a whole that will be the starting point of new desires, ideas and plans (Dewey 2005; Dewey 1964b). In education, Dewey (1959a; 1959b; 2005) uses a similar notion to indicate the rhythmic treatment that should be given to students' personal inclinations, which should be directed towards the constitution of a richer and more fortified self, and the formation of goods collectively agreed upon; the enrichment of individuality intensifies linguistic exchanges, creates enunciative forces and practical procedures that put energies under pressure, trigger new organisational syntheses, and enables the expansion of the self.

Dewey (1958; 1959a) suggests that, in truly educational experiences, communication is decisive in forming everyday exchanges, in which approvals, disapprovals, and encouragement reside, all kinds of exchange that influence the formation of character and the progress of thought. Language, therefore, is a vehicle for the transmission of knowledge and the formation of personalities capable of acting in favour of social transformation. Communication that aims to be educational is capable of arousing passions and broadening the field of desires, allowing new energies to be discovered and directed to the creation of new fields of

interests. By promoting reflection about the present and the past, communication opens the way for an imaginative reconstruction of the future.

Deweyan propositions on education and language renowned as poetic, or rhetoric, consider that the expression of people's varied readings of the world: how things were, how they are and how they could be, works as good "mediator *daimōns*" that helps individuals and groups to write with creativity the text of their lives, and thus being able to envision the exercise of *eudaimonia*, or happiness (Garisson 2010, p. 143). The relation of the human being to the poetic signs is marked by contingency, since each person responds to interactions with unique style, which makes it impossible to define completely and in advance the individual or social behaviours mobilised in the expressive forms; this indeterminacy is also lyrical, because it maintains the expectation that future dramatisations are better than the present ones, that they can boost ruptures with the established, and enable experimentation with more poetic alternatives.

Dewey's poetic and rhetoric pedagogy aims to create the best development and the best end for the learners, outlining the conditions to achieve these goals by enabling children and young people to desire and want what is beautiful, kind and lovely to themselves and to the environment in which they live (Hansen 2005; Cunha 2015). At first glance, human organisations, defined in physical-chemical terms, may seem limited; there is also the feeling that every new being that is born carries certain particular determinant colourings. But the fact is that all particularities are meant and directed within shared experiences; when individuals engage in increasingly complex and sublime interactions, they show unlimited and unexpected abilities which cannot be found in mechanical and non-aesthetic contexts, because they come from imagination, creativity and, above all, from hope of overcoming the existing (Dewey 1998; Dewey 2002).

In the instructional processes, observing behaviours and needs, being attentive to experiences and interactions, exercising dialogue and believing in the infinitude of the human being's cultural development are acts that bring forth the poetic imagination; the exercise of practical wisdom prudently leads internal linguistic agreements to the consolidation of thought and dispositions, leading to an attempt to discover what we can do in certain circumstances, so that we can update, in our relationships, the best and most creative possibilities, thus achieving the transcendence of the real selves. These ideas imply respect for individualities, because the expressive excesses of each one should not be silenced, but taken as problems to be investigated, in search of better directions; the poetic professional, who is wise and prudent, chooses to use hopeful hypotheses, avoids negative formulations, because he is convinced of his responsibility in the unique composition of the human being.

The goal of poetic and rhetorical education, therefore, is to train people with powers of expression, qualified for equal participation in public spaces, to compose their individualities in favour of community values inseparable from personal happiness. By possessing instruments, techniques and rhetorical resources, through the domain of linguistic symbolic systems, the learner acquires the condition to act dramatically in the ambit of his own thinking, having mental debates with contrasting argumentative lines, in order to make his own choices and organise his own conduct. In the political dimension, the person becomes capable of participating in the movements of collective life, defending renewed ideals, lovingly and effectively presenting transgressive positions which are essential for new syntheses and

rebalancing of customs. If it is possible to transform the self, it is also possible to rebuild society (Cunha 2005; Crick 2015).

Dewey believes that individual responses to educational interactions depend on how much the relationships established with different forms of association are alive, deep, and free; it also depends on the quality of the interests communicated and shared in the person's different experiences. The poetic and rhetorical formation of the individual aims to promote the freedom to define his identity, guiding him not with the intention to hinder, but to help focusing his interests. This training gives the individual tools to exercise the power of thought and action with autonomy. The signification and expression about the best and the becoming, supported by the wise, virtuous attitude, aim to offer concrete conditions so that the individuals know more, and have more freedom to question and act, engaging in activities that broaden the meaning of life, consubstantiating what is meant by individual and collective well-being.

In accord with Dewey (1964a p. 145), we can say that "the liberating, expansive power of art" is what provides the link between the formation of rhetorical individualities, expression of poetic-reflexive capacity, and the creation of a democratic lifestyle. Rhythmic aesthetic experiences liberate new impulses and thus moving old and deep-rooted habits, rooted and crystallised memories, which project themselves into new forms and enter a more fully integrated world, reaching a new configuration. Instrumentalised by language and knowing more meanings, the self gains autonomy and power to reorganise and redirect impulses, emotions and memories that generate internal conflicts; the self is convinced that it is possible to redirect such oppositions to the construction of an increasingly rich personality, recognising himself, still, as a citizen who contributes socially.

The Deweyan discourse, therefore, shows that, in the realm of the art, poetic and rhetorical educational experiences can be better accomplished (Dewey, 2005). The expansive power of a pedagogy based on artistic languages enables the consolidation of a poetic and rhetorical human identity, consequently enabling the experience of freedom of thought, debate and action, in search of collective and individual happiness and well-being. Without prescriptions or previously established methods, John Dewey establishes curricular principles for the teaching of the arts, exposing the means to a more humanised education, with emphasis on the promotion of the subjective and unique human identity, endowed with active power in the construction of itself, and in the transformation of the current political and social reality.

## Action research with Baião

Certain current curricular trends value and defend arts as languages and as an area of knowledge, whose specific contents need to be approached within social and cultural practices, respecting the learners' specific needs and learning conditions. When access and frequency to different human productions are extended, it is possible to understand that the arts constitute a way of leading the learner to signify the world and to understand that everyone can use the signs and instruments that make up the symbolic systems of artistic languages, in order to give meaning to things and experiences. These goals become means for greater ends, concerning the formation of the citizen's sensibility, the development of indi-

vidual capacity of dialogue, and the democratisation of culture, an irrevocable condition for the consolidation of a more equitable social (Penna 1999; Strazzacappa et al. 2005).

The general goals of these curricular tendencies are familiar to the ends sought by Dewey's poetic and rhetorical pedagogy, especially regarding the search for changes in the reality and the appreciation of dialogue. So, in our action-research, the actions developed by the researchers with the students were based on John Dewey's theory of research, which emphasises the exercise of reflective thinking, and in Deweyan principles about experiences truly capable of promoting the artistic development of the human being. In order to follow up and evaluate the activities, the researchers held daily meetings to review the planning; field, and filming journals were used as recording media.

The first stage of the work was to disseminate theoretical knowledge about Dewey's philosophical and educational conceptions, especially about the value of art in the formation of individualities and poetic and rhetorical teaching identities. Table 1 shows that the theoretical studies were carried out in two parts, aiming to lead the group of students to expand their repertoire of formal knowledge, which is indispensable to investigative and reflexive reasoning. Key aspects of Dewey's philosophical and educational thinking were presented and discussed, and subsequently, his assumptions about art and aesthetics were also presented and discussed. Avoiding dichotomising theory and practice, the formative meetings included musical experiences that fed on, or sustained, the discussions, which allowed us to learn from the organic nature of Dewey's work, which combines education, language and art for the consolidation of democratic contexts.

*Table 1.* Theoretical studies

Theoretical studies	
Part I	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. John Dewey: life and work</li> <li>2. The philosophy of John Dewey: the pragmatism</li> <li>3. Education as reflection and communication</li> <li>4. Education and democracy</li> </ol>
Part II	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. The art in John Dewey</li> <li>6. The art as an experience</li> <li>7. The art as a language: education's main language.</li> <li>8. The artistic development: appreciation, imagination and expression.</li> <li>9. The expansive power and the rhetorical nature of art</li> <li>10. Principles for the teaching of art</li> </ol>

Source: Theoretical programme organised by the researchers.

In a written record, the student Amanda highlighted similarities between the processes of artistic experience and reflective thinking: "Art in John Dewey is a process of real problematisation that leads to the investigation and organisation of materials and mobilises knowledges and experiences." Considering that "art as a vehicle for transformation" implies "a new way of working" in which "teachers would be primarily reflective teachers", Ivana connected the rhetorical and poetic power of artistic languages to the consolidation of a flexible school context, continuously problematised and, therefore, more democratic.

The theoretical discussions held in the first stage led the group to formulate a significant problem: what is it to have an aesthetic and artistic experience? Taking into account

the specialty of the researchers, it was proposed to deal with this problem within the realm of musical language, with experiences that had Baião as a theme, which draw the attention of the group, since both the National General Guidelines for Basic Education and the National Curricular Guidelines specific for Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education indicate that the teacher should work with the four languages of the arts: visual arts, music, dance and drama: prioritising knowledge of Brazilian cultural manifestations and traditions, in order to enable children and teenagers to access the goods of their region.

Due to its importance in the educational and philosophical work of Dewey and mainly for its poetic and rhetorical character, the conceptualisation of aesthetic rhythmic experience underlaid the diverse experiences of the meetings with the students. We sought a context marked by the freedom of expression and dissemination of knowledge that is typical to cultural life, as well as the mobilisation of different languages: oral, written, poetic and graphic, in situations of appreciation of works of art and conversations about the cultural and musical universe being studied. An indication that the proposed experiments interested and incited the participants' imagination was the fact that the students indicated works by visual artists and musicians, suggesting their appreciation by the group: poetic activities involving Rap and Baião, contemporary productions with characteristics of Baião, songs that use this rhythm containing lyrics of critical-social character, etc. Mateus explained that, during the meetings, the reading of a text by William James, a philosopher studied by him in his research activity, became "even more interesting and argumentative", since the philosopher also approaches teaching as an art.

Evidence of experiences with rhythmic aesthetic experiences was noticed in the use of percussive instruments that allowed the exploration and learning of rhythmic figures; there was intense mobilisation of emotions, reactions, knowledge and questions that were gradually channelled and balanced for the acquisition of knowledge and artistic skills. The speeches, and even the facial and gesture expressions, showed opposite tensions; for example, the feeling of difficulty and the desire to be able to master a technique, the anxiety caused by the learning process and the pleasure obtained in the accomplishment of an action, the attention to the rule and the relaxation, the experience of the concentration and the relaxation, etc. Because they were not silenced, these forces were explained and treated by the group; besides the researchers, the colleagues themselves were touched by the needs of the colleagues, which made the practice of mutual help a constant; as long as they dominated the instruments and rhythmic possibilities, the mastery of harmony and fulfilment by the coordination of energies, in search of the moment of appreciation, became evident. Table 2 shows the progress of the activities during the formative meetings.

The students' evaluative reports and records emphasised the value of the experience of composing collectively, a practice that enabled autonomy to produce enunciations through another language vehicle, debating sound peculiarities of the instruments, melodic possibilities, the relationship between poetry and music, forms of recording the rhythmic figures in relation to the lyrics of the song etc. The group experience was also valued for embracing the individualities within the group, sometimes taking advantage of interests and facilities, sometimes encouraging learning and new creations.

Table 2. Significant problem

What is to have an artistic and aesthetic experience involving musical language?			
Information	Hypotheses (about the problem)	Choices and actions	Evaluation (instruments)
Continuous studies of the Deweyan theory	Being able to use instruments and elements of the symbolic musical system	Participation in musical experiences connected by a theme: continuous and integrated experiences	Conversations to evaluate and adequate the process.
Researches and conversations about music, parameters of sounds, stamps, pulses and rhythms	Being able to deeply appreciate and significate the appreciated	Knowledge and experience of the genre	Records: texts, field journal and recording
Researches and conversations about the genre Baião	Being able to express themselves musically	Appreciation of images and musical productions	Appreciation of the group's compositions
Exploring instruments and its possibilities of use	To feel touched	Significations and expressions through drawing, poetry and other languages	Final evaluation of the whole process
Knowledge of rhythmic figures		Song writing in group, in Baião's rhythmic Enunciation by musical language	
Process permeated by experiences of aesthetic rhythmic quality			

Source: Training activities developed by researchers with students.

Table 3 presents the written composition of one of the groups, whose main objective was not to elaborate a sophisticated poetry, but to create a correct musical form, achievable by all, a simple melody for a tuned performance. The group reported the satisfaction of being able to organise a composition that, although short, involved everyone's efforts to harmonise contrasting materials, emotions, needs, particularities and goals, accepting the difficulties and seeking to solve them in some way. Recalling the intrinsic relationship between theory and experience, they pointed out that in acting they were learning to think through musical language, making constant adjustments in the relation between material and the production of sounds; thus, the final expression was truly the synthesis of the movement of intelligent thinking lived by each individual and by the group.

According to the members of the group, the verses of the song entitled "Transformação" (Transformation) were composed considering the central goal of the Dewey's ideology, which is to mobilise people to transform their identities through poetry and rhetoric, thinking of a democratic way of life:

Ei, meu povo, eu vim pra te mostrar / Hey, my people, I came to show you  
Que o papel do professor é o de transformar / That the role of the teacher is to transform

The students affirmed that the experiences of the formative meetings allowed them to imagine renewed educational actions, using the musical language to communicate a desirable re-

ality, which is the guarantee of the right of all to an education that enables development and transformation; for them, this should also be the experience of the teachers and students of the basic school: to poeticise to transform, and to transform to poeticise always more.

Table 3. Collective composition 1 (excerpt)

Transformação	
Alfaia, drum box, sonic blocks and tambourine.	
Ganzá.	
* Touch the rim or produce a high-pitched sound.	

Source: Writing systematized by the researchers from audio made by the students.

Table 4 presents the writing of the composition of another group of students, whose objective was to communicate their own identification with the Deweyan theoretical references regarding the valuation of individualities and the channeling and organisation of energies, which gives expressive and communicative power to the people. Musically, they chose to highlight, in the composition, the voice, or timbre, of each instrument<sup>2</sup>. When faced with difficulties in maintaining the rhythm in the entrance and exit of the instruments, the group decided to connect all the musical route through the execution of the zabumba, which was under the responsibility of a student with more experience in the musical universe; the evolution made all the instruments converge to the same melodic line, meaning the harmonisation of the whole.

The composers also related the elaboration of the work with the accomplishment of a rhythmic aesthetic experience, because besides the effort to work with different energies, adjusting ideation, materials and procedures, there was the intention to emphasise the procedural conjugation of the instruments, which stood out, silenced and merged themselves, symbolising the pulse of materiality in art, which emphasises sometimes one, sometimes another dimension.

The verses of the song entitled “Vamos brincar” (Let’s play) follow the movement of entrance of each instrument, followed by the combination of all of them:

2 The first eight bars are resumed four times; zabumba is the first instrument to be performed and quoted in the song and participates in all repetitions. From the second to the fourth resumption of these bars, other instruments: blocks, agogô and tambourine, are executed, quoted and presented individually; alfaia is executed from the ninth to sixteenth bar with zabumba. From the seventeenth bar, all instruments are performed together.

Vamos brincar, que a zabumba vai tocar / Let's play, that the zabumba will play  
 Vamos brincar, que os bloquinhos vão tocar / Let's play, that the blocks will play  
 Vamos brincar, que o agogô vai tocar / Let's play, that the agogo will play  
 Vamos brincar, que o pandeiro vai tocar / Let's play, that the tambourine will play  
 Vamos brincar, que a alfaia vai tocar / Let's play, that the alfaia will play  
 No nosso Baião todos tocarão / In our Baião everybody will play  
 No nosso Baião todos tocarão / In our Baião everybody will play

Table 4. Collective composition 2 (excerpt)

**Vamos Brincar**

Zabumba,  
 alfaia, blocks,  
 agogô,  
 tambourine.

\* Touch the  
 rim or  
 produce a  
 high-pitched  
 sound.

Va - mosbrin - car - que - a za - bum - ba vai to - car  
 os blo - qui - nhos vão to - car  
 oa - go - go - o vai to - car  
 o pan - dei - ro vai to - car

Va - mosbrin - car - que - a al - fai - a vai to - car

No no - sso - bai - ão to - dos to - ca -

rão No no - sso - bai - ão to - dos to - ca - rão

Source: Writing systematized by the researchers from audio made by the students.

The members of this group reported having a certain difficulty in maintaining the tuning of the voices due to the absence of harmonic instruments, but they declared themselves satisfied with the result of the work for having been able to operate the rhythm properly, which allowed introducing choreography in the presentation and execution of the instruments.

They stated that there were several initial conversations to come to an agreement on the goals of the composition, which were effectively made aware and organised during the investigative process, as the ends were being met, they would become the means for new constructions.

Regarding the theoretical bases of the activity, the group emphasised Dewey's assumption that the originality and independence of thought: pillars of creativity, are much more associated with the aesthetic and rhythmic process of production than with the courses of action initially conceived. The activity made them reflect on the current practices in basic school, especially on the inefficacy of actions without content, aimed solely at the fulfilment of protocols, in which the ends are supposedly achieved through a previously organised script; they remembered that the value of artistic proposals is based on the presentation of problem-situations that must be actively treated, so that their results are autonomous and authorial, causing feelings of fulfilment.

The cases used above to illustrate the work of the students reveal that the participants achieved a good theoretical comprehension and appropriate practical recontextualisation of Deweyan principles about art and artistic development, which helped them construct meaningful practice possibilities with the musical language, besides a reflection on the broader universe of the arts. Uniting theory and practice, the formative activities seem to have reached the goal of realising rhythmic aesthetic experiences, reinforcing the hypothesis that the Deweyan conceptions can be achieving the purpose of forming creative, expressive subjects and participants in the culture. We verify that the artistic work is only fully effective when there are efforts aimed at the configuration of aesthetic contexts, poetic elaboration, glimpsing the desirable, the utopian.

A theme that appeared during the evaluation of the activity by the students was the applicability of this method in early childhood education (children up to 5 years-old) and in the first years of elementary school: which involves children up to 10 years old. The students realised that not only music, through the exploration of songs, instruments or sonorous objects, but also other didactic resources, such as drawings, paintings, playdough, storytelling, etc., should be worked in conversations and in pleasant interpersonal relations, ensuring freedom to exchange ideas, experimentation, analysis of errors and revisions, in environments that favour the expansion of perceptions and autonomy for action; in short, in environments that Dewey characterises as democratic.

Works of art should not be the only objects of artistic education in schools; all the materials and processes that are part of students' everyday life can be transformed into aesthetic objects, according to a pedagogy that is dedicated to the development of rhythmic aesthetic experiences and, consequently, to the development of dialogic, reflexive and transformative thinking. Water games, games situations, conversation circles, participation in groupings, didactic or cultural tours, gardening or green areas activities, care of animals, etc. are all experiences capable of stimulating individuality and participation in collective actions, referring to the foundations of art. In this pedagogical approach, the organisation and functioning of schools must be undertaken responsibly by teachers and managers who are imbued with a new mentality that has repercussions on curricula and everyday experiences.

## Final considerations

Through John Dewey's philosophical and educational conceptions, with special attention to his aesthetic theory, it was possible to lead a group of university students, future teachers, to understand the relevance of experiencing aesthetic moments to poetically project the possibility of new paths for the teaching of the arts and, more broadly, for the formation of their own individualities. The work developed with the musical language in Dewey's poetic and rhetorical perspective suggests that the organisation of an environment full of meaning affects the passions and enables the dialogue in search of consensuses, impelling people to assume different forms of relationship and participation from the usual ones.

The students participating in the group activity with the music expressed intense and warm satisfaction when they finished their production, which shows the co-ordination of the physical and mental energies in their daily universe. Rhythmic aesthetic experiences led to aesthetic appreciation, in the form of emotional and rational perception that these acts were truly artistic, and that the imaginative and creative experience reached its peak. Such experiences enhanced the knowledge of those students, enabling them to the development of more actions in the school environment: as two participants who, in their elementary school curricular internships, elaborated a thematic project on Brazilian popular manifestations, with emphasis on musical experiences.

It should be noted that, in order to be effective in the performance of teachers who dedicate themselves to the teaching of musical language in schools according to a poetic and rhetorical pedagogy; it is essential to develop their musicality. According to Dewey (2002), it is not possible for a person to poetise the existence of a flowery desert if she never had the opportunity to participate in experiences related to the beauty of flowers. This reflection refers to the responsibility of initial teacher training courses, as well as the courses offered to those who are already teachers. The activity reported here suggests the possibility of ally-ing theoretical studies with practical experiences in the field of music, which can be thought for other areas of knowledge as well.

Experiences that are rich in any artistic language: drawings and paintings, for example, promote the mobilisation of aesthetic sensibility and reflexive thinking, contributing to the construction of a self that recognises its potentialities. This singular identity, aware of its power, goes beyond the limits of individuality, becoming an inseparable part of the collective; a social and political self, according to Deweyan conceptions, capable of recognising its own limits and embracing forms of expression of others, a self that gratifies itself with its personal action and, at the same time, situates this action within significant experiences for common ends.

In order for music: and this is true for arts in general, to be integrated into the school context, it is necessary for educators to be sensitive to aesthetic experience, to be able to appreciate different musical genres and to understand artistic manifestations as effective possibilities for communication. The formation of the sensitive citizen depends, therefore, on having a sensitive teacher, but it is also necessary to take into account the actions of managers, who are responsible for the organisation of an environment open to experimentation and innovation inside the classroom, in order to bring into school the variety and richness of the cultural life of the community.

The value conferred by Dewey on aesthetic experiences that foster the linguistic domain and satisfy the will to power: the power to speak, to argue, to do, to transform, to be a citizen:

contributes to reflect not only on the arts, on the teaching of the arts or on education in general, but also on research methodologies. For Dewey (2005), art is valuable to human associations because it transports moral and ethical goods, touches the human being in such a way that transcends the material limits of art, thus helping to recreate the impulse and the thought, and so feeding the will to power, the desire to imagine, create and recreate senses and realities. Artistic and aesthetic experience: both that of the artist and that of the teacher, the student and the researcher, leads people to know themselves and to transform themselves internally. When researchers use a method that allows reflection on the practice, using a dialogic and participatory approach, the research is also permeated by aesthetic and artistic qualities. Action research has this potential, since it is capable of modifying the researchers' internal dispositions, giving them the power to imagine and project new meanings to the researched reality.

The Deweyan propositions about reflexive thinking, that are developed through artistic and aesthetic experiences, teach us that scientific research can be lively and enriching, not limited by techniques or protocols unrelated to the moral values of the researcher. To make it happen, it is necessary to establish ethical agreements among all those involved in research, so that everyone finds space to constantly plan and revise the means and ends they seek, so that their actions are not sterile, and can produce new syntheses of the self and of imaginative thinking.

## References

- André, M. (2001). Pesquisa em educação: buscando rigor e qualidade. *Cadernos de Pesquisa* 113, 51-64. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0100-15742001000200003>
- Brasil (2010). Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais Gerais para a Educação Básica. Brasília: CNE/CEB.
- Cunha, M. V. (2005). Comunicação e arte, ou a arte da comunicação, em John Dewey. *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos*, 86(213/214), 9-20.
- Cunha, M. V. (2015). A atualidade de John Dewey para a educação: mais arte, não menos. *Educação e Cultura Contemporânea*, 12(28), 67-83.
- Crick, N. (2015). Compor a vontade de poder: John Dewey sobre a educação retórica para uma democracia radical. *Educação e Cultura Contemporânea*, 12(28), 164-183.
- Dewey, J. (1958). *Experience and nature*. New York: Dover.
- Dewey, J. (1959a). Democracia e educação: introdução à filosofia da educação. São Paulo: Nacional.
- Dewey, J. (1959b). Interesse e esforço. In A. Teixeira (Ed.), *Vida e educação* (p. 63-113). São Paulo: Nacional.
- Dewey, J. (1964a). Affective thought in logic and painting. In D. Archambault (Ed.), *John Dewey on education* (p. 141-148). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Dewey, J. (1964b). Individuality and experience. In D. Archambault (Ed.), *John Dewey on education* (p. 49-156). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Dewey, J. (1998). The need for a recovery of philosophy. In L. Hickman & T. Alexander (Eds.), *The essential Dewey* (p. 46-70). Volume 1: Pragmatism, Education, Democracy. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Dewey, J. (2002). *Human nature and conduct: an introduction to social psychology*. New York: Prometheus Books.
- Dewey, J. (2005). *Art as experience*. New York: Perigee.
- Ericsson, P. F. (2003). Rhetorical theory: kairos and decorum. In P. F. Ericsson (Ed.), *Beyond the laments, beyond the boundaries: communicating about composition*. Thesis. 256 p. Michigan: Michigan Technological University Press.

- Garrison, J. (2010). *Dewey and Eros: wisdom and desire in the art of teaching*. Charlotte: IAP.
- Hansen, D. T. (2005). Uma poética do ensino. *Educação em Revista*, 6, 95-128.
- Kinneavy, J. L. (2002). Kairos in classical and modern rhetorical theory. In P. Sipiora & J. S. Baumlin (Eds.), *Rhetoric and Kairos: essays in history, theory, and praxis* (p. 58-76). Albany: State of University New York Press.
- Moraes, Jonas Rodrigues (2013). *Batuques, lundu, modinha e a emersão do baião no nordeste brasileiro*. XXVII Simpósio Nacional de História. Recuperado de: [http://www.snh2013.anpuh.org/resources/anais/27/1364330254\\_ARQUIVO\\_JonasartigobatuqueelunduartigoANPUHNatal.pdf](http://www.snh2013.anpuh.org/resources/anais/27/1364330254_ARQUIVO_JonasartigobatuqueelunduartigoANPUHNatal.pdf)
- Penna, M. (1999). Ensino de arte: um momento de transição. *Pró-Posições*, 10(3), 57-66.
- Poulakos, J. (1995). Terms for sophistic rhetorical. In J. Poulakos (Ed.), *Sophistical rhetoric in classical Greece*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Rocha, K. M., Garcia, M. V., & Menezes-Junior, J. A. M. (2016). Práticas de investigação-ação na formação de professores. *ATAS - Investigação qualitativa em educação*, 1, 577-582.
- Silva, J. A. M. (2008). Investigação-ação educacional e trajetórias humanas: elos nem tão frágeis assim. *Práxis educacional*, 4(5), 79-108.
- Strazzacapa, M., Nassif-Schroeder, S. C., & Schoereder, J. (2005). A construção do conhecimento em Arte. In A. B. Bittencourt & W. M. Oliveira Júnior (Eds.), *Estudo, pensamento e criação* (p. 75-82). Campinas: Unicamp.
- Tatit, Luiz. (2004). *O século da canção*. Cotia: Ateliê Editorial.
- Tripp, D. (2005). Pesquisa-ação: uma introdução metodológica. *Educação e Pesquisa*, 31(3), 443-466. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1517-97022005000300009>

## Acknowledgments

The research that originated this article was subsidised by National Counsel of Technological and Scientific Development: CNPq, Brazil

## About the authors

*Erika Natacha Fernandes de Andrade*. PhD in Education from São Paulo State University (UNESP), professor of Art and Education in the Graduate Studies Programme of Pedagogy of the University of São Paulo, Ribeirão Preto, Brazil. Her researches and publications focus on John Dewey's philosophy of art, art and education and rhetoric.

*Marcus Vinicius da Cunha*. PhD in Education from University of São Paulo (USP), professor of Philosophy of Education in the Graduate Studies Programme of Pedagogy and in the Postgraduate Programme in Education of the University of São Paulo, Ribeirão Preto, Brazil, and CNPq researcher. His researches and publications focuses on John Dewey's philosophy of education, history of education in Brazil and rhetoric.

### Authors' address

Faculdade de Filosofia, Ciências e Letras de Ribeirão Preto – USP  
 Departamento de Educação, Informação e Comunicação  
 Avenida Bandeirantes, 3900  
 Ribeirão Preto – São Paulo – Brazil  
 CEP 14040-901  
 E-mails: erikaandra@hotmail.com / mvcunha2@hotmail.com