

# VISUAL LANGUAGES AND CULTURE OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONS

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## ESSAY 18/01

EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONAL SKILL  
VISUAL LANGUAGE  
NARRATIVE  
TRAINING

An ample literature recognises how images can significantly impact learning processes. Indeed, the visual recalls the possibility to stimulate and activate foreknowledge suited to the learning objects and to develop the capacity to problematise the contents proposed with reference to complex contexts. Thus, in the educational contexts, the image and, gen-

erally speaking, visual art represent excellent instruments of transmission, communication and deepening of knowledge, contributing to the definition of a cultural model of professional skills, with particular reference to the educational figures like pedagogists, teachers and educators who operate in social and culture contexts.

With reference to the area of study “Art and Education,” this short paper will specifically analyse how images and the patrimonies of a visual nature can contribute to the formation of professional educational figures, such as pedagogists, teachers and educators who operate in social and cultural contexts. Indeed, it is recognised how an experience of a visual nature can fill a strategic educational role, above all in educational terms. Thus, the image and more in general the visual art in the spaces of training can be considered as instruments par excellence for the transmission, communication and deepening of knowledge, contributing to the definition of a cultural models of professional skills (Panciroli 2016; Caldin, Dainese, Panciroli 2017). The contexts of training are thus transformed from spaces of predefined knowledge to laboratories for the acquisition and transformation of knowledge. These changes are also based on the presupposition that knowledge cannot be transmitted but must activate processes of cognitive and emotive reconstruction in the subjects. The subject is no longer understood as an acritical consumer of knowledge but as a constructor and interpreter of knowledge and, in this sense, the images can vehicle such processes. Indeed, the training experience realised by means of the use of the visual languages have highlighted the transition from a decoded reading of meanings already present and definite to interpretive meaning-creating processes, based on the aggregation of several meanings. It thus becomes fundamental to be able to manipulate objects to construct new personal and professional meanings (Raiyn, 2016; Panciroli 2019). Hence, the image becomes metaphor in that it allows for the re-elaboration of meanings in an original way and in close connection with the professional context of provenance.

Specifically with regard to the processes of acquisition and cognitive re-elaboration, the visual recalls the possibility to stimulate and activate foreknowledge suited to the objects of learning and to develop the capacity to problematise the contents proposed with reference to complex contexts. In a multimedia and multimodal perspective

even digital technology has multiplied and promoted new approaches oriented to visual thinking, on the grounds of which learning becomes more meaningful when ideas, words and concepts are associated to images (Kress 2009; Calvani 2011; Landriscina 2012; Lumbelli 2012; Serafini 2014; Lacelle, Boutin, Lebrun 2017; Panciroli, Corazza, Macaudo 2019). In that sense, the images represent a motivating mediator, particularly effective for stimulating and improving learning. With reference to the theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983), visual intelligence indeed defines the cognitive abilities linked to the imagination and to the capacity to “think by images,” that is to mentally picture the concepts, even before verbalising them, allowing one to make an immediate experience of the world (Robertson 2003; Grandin 2006; Cicalò 2016; Fiorentino 2018). The production/use of an image promotes motivation allowing one to activate learning and explorative processes, those of categorisation, memory, prediction, comprehension, as well as empathy. In this regard also Clark and Lyons (2010) identify among the functions of the images those regarding attention, the activation of knowledge, the minimisation of the cognitive load and support for motivation. Hence, if the images can exert the function of anticipation and modelling vis-à-vis knowledge (Rivoltella 2012), the processes of acquisition and re-elaboration of the knowledge are tied not only to the vision of the images of the world but also to the representation of the world by images. The image is thus understood both as product that presupposes an activity of reading, understanding, interpretation and re-elaboration of meanings, and as process with reference to the construction and diffusion of new semantic contents. Within the scope of a self-regulated and motivating learning model (Hattie, & Timperley, 2007), via the images the students generate and use images actively, constructing new meaning networks (Rivoltella, Rossi 2019). Hence, in a meaningful learning process there have to be interconnected visual intelligences and knowledge-building.

The training experiments carried out in the years 2014-2015 at the Department of Education Sciences of the University of Bologna until the present have been addressed to the design of pathways via visual patrimonies for the development of abilities and competencies aimed at the enhancement of educational professional profiles. Specifically, the profiles involved were teachers, social and cultural educators, pedagogists. The model which the following educational experiments have referred to, i.e. "Learning about school heritage," "At school with the heritage" and "Art and inclusion," embraces two fundamental approaches: that of narration and that of the knowledge-building.

As regards the narrative approach, the training has used as the privileged channel of mediation the setting up of images, traced back to a number of expressive forms (photography, cartoon, street art, cinema,...), defining the educational process in which the educators have been involved, narrating new aspects that have been enriched with new meanings. Indeed, within this visual corpus, attention has been focused on images that, albeit spatially and temporally distant, provided a reading that time by time is new and semantically dense. Instead, in relation to the constructivist approach, the trainee educators have been able to define and re-elaborate concepts in which the bond between creativity and experience has become particularly relevant. In this sense, creativity has been structured as a form of graphic-visual and emotional intelligence that has gradually been adapted to experience, manifesting itself through the realisation of artefacts. The visual artefact (Rossi, 2010; 2019) has indeed allowed the student to converse with the world and with knowledge allowing him/her to build bridges between the different levels of knowledge itself, between formal and informal contexts, between real and digital spaces, between spaces of experience and those of knowledge, between spaces for reflection and those for training.

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