

Cognitive stimulation through the arts in girls and boys from the Peripa commune

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Abstract

The mediation of the arts in cognitive processes has borne fruits of indisputable veracity in multiple educational fields. When the subject appreciates, imagines, produces, shares theoretical, practical and artistic experiences, emotions are activated that allow memory to be fixed, stimulate multiple brain circuits, connect -like a powerful network- the subcortical and cortical areas of the brain specialized in more complex processes. such as reasoning, relational skills, creativity and the critical faculty. The links between arts and cognition, in this study, are conceived as proposals for comprehensive enrichment (intellectual, ethical, intercultural) for boys and girls from the Peripa indigenous commune of Santo Domingo, Ecuador, with non-special educational needs or associated with disabilities, but doomed to a sense of humor. To this end, emphasis is placed on a qualitative methodology and on a research typology based on the arts, fundamentally through theater, dance and painting through the application of documentary case observation techniques and field work, supported by the interview and focus group. In theatrical activities, children recognize the values through the characterization of the characters in the plays. Thus, a psychomotor development of language and emotion management can be appreciated. During the development of dance activities, an improvement in the coordination of movements is observed. Through painting, children strengthen fine motor skills, manage emotions and recreate imaginary universes of human improvement.

Keywords: cognition; artistic education; interculturality; art psychology

Introduction:

Art, in pedagogical processes, stimulates sensitivity in children, imaginative and creative capacities, harmonious relationships between mind and body. In this regard, Abad and García consider that: It is necessary that we conceive of education as an experience in which children interpret and investigate; where the arts, specifically Contemporary Art, are considered an instrument of enormous value for the construction of learning, but at the same time, for the integral development of children [...] (2012, p. 23).

A good education system must nurture and foster all forms of intelligence, including those related to the arts; otherwise, it will ignore the basic fields of human potential and slow down children's cognitive development. Arts does not only mean painting, drawing, but far beyond them include activities such as dance, music and theater. In this research we will base our vision on the benefits of cognitive stimulation through theater. According to Motos, "theatre is a means at the service of students and not an end in itself. It is not a question of training actors or actresses but of using dramatic forms and strategies to educate people" (2009, p. 14).

In view of this, the following research questions arise:

1. How does theater influence the cognitive stimulation of children in the Peripa commune?
2. How does theater contribute to the integral strengthening and significant learning of the children of the Peripa commune?

Meanwhile, the general objective of this work is to demonstrate the relationship between the arts and cognitive development through stimulation in children from the Peripa commune. Meanwhile, the specific objectives will be to identify the influence of theater on children's cognitive stimulation. Next, distinguish the contributions linked by the aforementioned arts to the integral educational strengthening. Finally, to characterize the importance of these themes in the enhancement of short- and long-term procedural memory. With the collaboration of the students¹ of the Basic Education career of the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador Santo Domingo campus, the activities of intervention of the arts for cognitive stimulation in the children of the Peripa commune, Santo

Domingo, Ecuador. From these, it was possible to observe that art reflects the existence of different ways of expressing the reality that surrounds us and not only through words and numbers, but also through much more dynamic activities linked to theater, painting and music. The interactions associated with the arts allowed for the achievement of higher quality learning, as the arts motivate and awaken positive emotions that lead to enthusiastic learning and interest in learning. Theater contributes to comprehensive strengthening and meaningful learning from the development of motivation, emotions, social skills and teamwork.

Methodology

This research is coherent with the qualitative approach since it aims to understand the set of interrelated qualities on the subject-object of study. The qualitative perspective of the research tries to approach social reality from the use of data that is neither statistical nor quantitatively measurable, as Delgado mentions when he maintains the following premise: "It is not possible to make known the theories that involve subjects and objects without qualifying them, since it is that qualification that indicates what people are like, processes, things, etc." (2019, p. 222).

The design of the research is Research-Action, this allows the study of a particular social problem that requires a solution and affects a certain group of people. In this regard, Salgado points out that "the purpose of Research-Action is to solve everyday and immediate problems, and to improve concrete practices. Its fundamental purpose is to provide information that guides decision-making for programs, processes, and structural reforms" (2007, p. 73).

Research is Based on the Arts, IBA, allows for a relationship with education and art, thus connecting the arts with education through research processes that involve the development of creativity in all its sense. Hernández reaffirms what has been said by referring in his text to the characteristics of the IBA in which he points out that "it uses artistic and aesthetic elements, seeks other ways of looking at and representing the experience and tries to unveil what is not talked about" (2008, p. 94).

It is worth mentioning that observation played, within this project, a fundamental role for the collection and study of data. In turn, it allowed the identification of results according to the objectives set; and also, it generated new experiences in the students of Education Sciences through direct observation, which was based on the personal contact of the object of study, that is, the children of the Raúl Andrade Educational Unit in the Peripa Commune. The research was reflected through an instrument that was the observation guide, where several questions related to the objective of the project were raised. This type of instrument, as its name mentions, was the guide and part that was needed to respond to each of the unknowns raised by the students, who directed and developed the activities focusing on the different artistic manifestations.

In the visit to the Peripa Commune, the seventh-grade students used the interview technique to obtain information on how the children of the Raúl Gonzales Educational Unit felt. During the activities carried out by the students of the Catholic University of Ecuador Santo Domingo campus, the areas of painting, dance and theater were highlighted; At the end of the activities, three representatives of each station interviewed different authorities.

The questions asked were: What did you think of the activities? Which activity caught your attention the most? How did you think of the activity we carried out with the children? What did you think of our performance in relation to the activities carried out, and do you think that these activities represented your culture? The answers were pleasant and happy regarding the performance of each of the students and how they performed in their actions as future teachers.

Another instrument that was used in this research is the *focus group*. This is a qualitative research technique that brings together experts, with the aim of presenting different opinions on some activities or services performed. Within this research, the *focus group* consisted of being able to achieve the dissertation according to the planning in which the groups discussed their activities carried out, the achievements and what their objectives were. This method helped the research to share relevant information about the Peripa Community, so that, in the future, it could improve the different activities that were applied to the students.

You must first work on the document to be analyzed, then upload the document to the MAXQDA program in order to find the word frequency. When using this function, a set of words is obtained which must be filtered according to the number of incident in the document. Finally, the program makes it easier for us to create figures or graphs, thus allowing us to have a more interactive visualization of the data.

Results

The results were described in three thematic axes that are linked to cognitive stimulation through the implementation of the different artistic manifestations: theater, dance and painting, being analyzed with their respective theoretical frameworks. Memory, attention and active listening are considered activities linked to teamwork, which are developed extensively in the performing arts. Those who practice these performing arts have the possibility of remembering choreographies, as well as their movements, positions as well as space-time displacements, following the music and the rest of the body to dance. In this order, a methodology of application in the aforementioned arts that promote the development of cognitive skills is projected.

Axis 1: Cognitive stimulation through theatre

The presence of theatre as an artistic and pedagogical expression is presented to strengthen the communicative and cognitive capacities of students, to the extent that it focuses not only on linguistic skills, but above all on skills of constructing, announcing and transferring knowledge. According to Álvarez (2011), theater is a branch of the performing arts, through which plays or stories are personified in front of an audience. In the same way, theatre allows us to come into contact with knowledge in a pleasant and entertaining way.

Likewise, theater helps us to know ourselves thanks to the fact that we can identify with the characters and understand who we are and what we want to be. The performing arts help to expand the life experience of each member, and that leads him to externalize the emotions and feelings that must flow from his personal identification and the world that sensitizes him. Likewise, it offers the congruence of exercising a critical stance when acting (Serrano 2021).

The importance of the arts lies in the fact that they promote the development of graphic expression, improve and enhance psychomotor and affective skills in children: they reinforce their mathematical skills and generate communication processes of and in various languages, for better understanding, make them more sociable, and better coordinate their thoughts, in addition to showing a remarkable perception of memory in the short and medium term. according to García (2015).

The presentation of the play entitled *Pipo, the pink monster*, was one of the strategies used for cognitive stimulation and educational inclusion with artistic mediation. Through this, different links could be made, hence the present work has been structured as follows:

1. Theatre linked to emotions
2. Language development through theatre
3. Psychomotor development through theatre

4. Theatre linked to multiple intelligences
5. Memory and its link to theatre

Peña Castro (2018) highlights that, through the implementation of a theatrical pedagogy through several planned sessions, where the student practices sensitization dynamics, experiences exercises and playful body games, and experiments through improvisation of the expressive and communicative capacities of their body. These results respond to the objectives which aim to identify the initial empirical context linked to the integral formation of children, to determine the state of the art related to cognitive stimulation and educational inclusion through the design of educational activities of artistic integration which were evaluated by means of a participatory observation guide, and from that information the

results obtained were elaborated and synthesized.

Design of artistic integration activities through theatre

During the ethnographic observation carried out in the Raúl Andrade educational unit, which is located in the Tsáchilas Peripa commune, the play entitled *Pipo, the pink monster* was carried out, in order to work on cognitive stimulation in students. For the development and staging of the play, the participants were chosen at random, their performance in the play was satisfactory, since they managed to express, share emotions, social skills and great performance for teamwork. The necessary financial resources were available for the setting of the stage space, characterization and clothing of the characters (See Figure 1).



Note: Characterization of the characters for the play Pipo the Pink Monster.

Figure 1: Estimulación cognitiva a través del teatro

What has been done in the aforementioned project complies with what Esquivel Cruz (2018) expresses when he mentions that the presence of art in education, through art education and education through art, contributes decisively to the integral development of children and young people, while promoting dialogue and social cohesion

Results of the execution of cognitive stimulation activities through theatre

It can be mentioned that in the activity carried out at the Raúl Andrade educational unit, which is located in the Tsáchilas Peripa commune, the students reacted with positive emotions in the development of the play entitled *Pipo, the pink monster*. However, the question arises whether this is always the case. From the point of view of Daza et al: You have

to learn to feel, express and manage all emotions, understanding what you are feeling and the reason for that feeling, in order to perceive how these emotions influence behavior and know how to control them, as well as understand those of others (2021, p. 32).

Theatre gives children knowledge of their own bodies, emotions and reactions. In addition, it also provides listening skills, teamwork, empathy, improved interpersonal relationships and increased self-esteem. Therefore, the emotions that the student perceives and experiences around him, as well as the emotional bond he forms with the teacher, with the space, with his classmates, with himself, have a key influence on his personal and social development process (See Figure 2).



Note: Staging of the play Pipo the Pink Monster.

Figure 2: Cognitive stimulation through theatre

Within the Peripa commune, it was possible to see how the children developed spontaneously in the play, in addition to entering the assigned role, thus managing to develop the story in a chronological and pertinent way. Theatre is one of the ways of intervening in language as it helps to improve and enrich vocabulary. It also contributes to the management of intonation, pronunciation and vocalization. According to Pollo: Theatrical language is composed of verbal language and expressive, corporal and musical language. In this way, we discover the full

potential that each one has in themselves, learning ways of communicating that may seem new just because we were not used to using them (2018, p. 75).

Theater is undoubtedly an activity, in which children can develop learning through movement, this helps them to develop their body expression, facilitating them to become aware of their body, expression of feelings and sensations. Cedeño (2018) establishes that, through the body, gesture and body attitude, it is possible to learn the first social



Note: Participation of all students, with a series of movements to the rhythm of the music. Source: Mauricio Legarda (2022).

Figure 3: A second of happiness

To carry out the activity, a series of resources were used, such as human, technological and material resources, all necessary for the project to develop in optimal conditions.

Results of the execution of cognitive stimulation activities through dance

Life is a continuous and dynamic process which is learned and skills are developed from an early age. Chatzihidiroglou et al. (2018) state that motor skills are fundamental within the elaboration of psychological functions in the first years of life and that the most elementary forms of communication and relationships are generated through movement. (Rev.). These are perfected over time and new ones emerge.

Dance as education has important benefits for the social relationships of students both inside and outside the educational campus, which could be observed while the performance was carried out by the children. The different forms of dance are social inheritances for the students since emotions can be expressed. Laban (1978) points out that dance can be considered as the poetry of bodily actions in space, pointing out that one of the purposes of dance is the domination and control of the body both physically and communicatively.

Through movement and repetition, the brain can be stimulated, where we can memorize steps among other functions. Gatica (2016) comments that it is the language that expresses non-verbal language and when a person is learning to dance, each step is mentally systematized; moreover, he numbers each movement according to the space-time, type of music or sounds he wants to dance (Rev.). Dance and memory work hand in hand since when we express the movements we memorize them.

It has always been said that dance is a form of body expression, it is what makes us feel the dance and helps us to express ourselves with it, and a series of feelings of joy and joy can be transmitted. Dierssen (2019) analyzes that, in extrinsic motivation, people are less likely to solve intricate problems and generate innovative ideas. In that order, dancing is the way that human beings have had to express what they feel at all times, no matter what the emotion is.

According to Delgado, "together with theater, dance is part of the performing arts; works with the body: the facial gestures and body movements of the dancers express feelings, ideas or stories" (2019, p. 98).

Axis 3: Cognitive stimulation through painting. Design of artistic integration activities through painting

The initial activity was based on a moment of motivation through the artistic game *What animal am I*, which consisted of representing, through the drawing of an animal, the quality of a person. In this case, pairs were formed, and imitating the drawing that was presented on the billboard where it was recreated on the face of each child (See Figure 1). Each animal represented a quality, as, for example, the tiger represented bravery, the dog loyalty, the cat wit, the rabbit kindness, etc.

This activity is in line with what Sevilla et al express, regarding that "drawing is one of the skills that the child has to communicate" (2018, p. 62). In this case, the dynamics presented allow both girls and boys to make known what they think of their classmates, but in a slightly more special way, through painting.



Note: Children painting animal figures on the faces of their classmates. Source: Alexander Campaña (2022).

Figure 4: Activity *What animal am I?*

After culminating with the dynamic, the couples presented their creations sharing with their partners why they have chosen a certain animal to draw on their partner's face, mentioning in turn, the quality that it represented. The activity allowed both boys and girls to be motivated to continue with the next dynamic called *The fruit salad*. This

activity consisted of separating the usual groups so that interpersonal relationships can develop. This was achieved through fruit selection, where managers told a story introducing fruits as characters. Every time a fruit was mentioned, the students moved place. Thus, when it was said: *One day the apple...* the girl who is said fruit changed positions with other

people who were also children. For Murillo, "the existence of segregation, whether it is ethnic-racial, socioeconomic level, ability or origin, even at low levels, is inherently contrary to the existence of inclusive education" (2016, p. 12). This type of activity allows inclusion to emerge spontaneously, since it separates the groups and strengthens the interaction with all the children.

Once the order of the children was established, the dynamics were completed with the activity *Painting my culture*, which was based on

answering, through drawings painted with watercolors, the questions captured in the inquiring staircase, a didactic material that contains ten questions about the culture of the Peripa commune. Once the activity was explained, the materials were delivered, each child had two different colors, that is, to use other colors, they had to interact with their classmates and, in a respectful way, ask for some of their materials (See Figure 5).



Figura 5: *Actividad Pintando mi cultura*

Note: Boys and girls painting with watercolors and interacting with their classmates. Source: Marjorie Flor (2022).

Once completed, the paintings were presented and socialized. From there, it was opened in a space of interaction and dialogue where each child spoke about their work and what they felt during the activity, especially in front of the idea of sharing with all their classmates and not just with some, promoting in turn, inclusion and respect for others. According to Ortiz, quoted in Ramírez, "the basic objective of inclusion is not to leave anyone out of institutions, both in the educational and physical spheres, as well as socially" (2015, p. 6). With this, all children will be heard and, likewise, they will listen to their other classmates. The resources used during the cognitive stimulation and educational inclusion project were separated into several sections. On the one hand, and the most important, the human resources, made up of the students of the Catholic University of Santo Domingo, of the Career of Education Sciences in their subject of Ethnography. The material resources were various, such as sheets of cardboard, liquid paints and brushes, liquid rubber, scissors, bond paper, double-sided tape and permanent markers.

Results of the execution of cognitive stimulation activities through painting

Art is that which encompasses everything that human beings create to make known how they interpret the world around them. This concept manifests itself in several ways and painting is one of them. This is used by several people to express their emotions and ideas and in the educational field, it is where the importance of its application is most reflected. In view of this, the question arises: Does the relationship of activities linked to art, and in this case, to painting, allow the development of cognitive abilities and educational inclusion with artistic mediation to favor the integral, intellectual and moral formation of the development of the children of the Peripa commune?

Through the activity *Painting smiles*, three sections were broken down where children enjoyed the art of painting. Each dynamic aimed to develop creativity, concentration, sensitivity and expression, and of course, promote inclusion, where teachers and students actively participate and reflect, through activity, respect, empathy and the union that exists within their community.

The plastic arts can be considered as a primordial and characteristic part that allows all human beings to be identified, since it facilitates the transmission of culture in all its breadth. Through painting, the children

demonstrated part of their culture and way of life. As Dierssen mentions, "art is a manifestation of human activity through which the real is interpreted or the imagined is captured with plastic, linguistic or sound resources" (2019, p. 32). That is why it should be known that the implementation of plastic arts in the cognitive development of children favors and enhances their memorization, creativity and expression of emotions and ideas.

The plastic arts in the individual's childhood stage are of utmost importance to be able to develop their motor skills. In the dynamic, all the children had contact with the painting and, through movements with their brushes and fingers, they let their creativity flow. According to Cabrera and Guamán, "children are able to create, explore and express the environment freely as they perceive it, developing their own concepts of objects through their manipulation" (2020, p. 29). Art allows children to develop fine motor skills, here they explore and experiment through touch and the visual medium, thus helping to generate critical and socio-affective thinking.

In the activity, it was possible to visualize that some children expressed different emotions, that is, that painting tends to make people feel and reflect in a different way. According to Dierssen, "the fact that positive and negative emotions are based on different celebratory areas helps explain why we can feel happy and sad at the same time" (2019, p. 352). Thus, we can conclude that feelings are directly linked to the paintings made by students, in such a way that they can express their ideas and emotions.

The activity carried out evidenced the creativity of the children embodied through painting. Before making their drawings, the students thought about how, through dots, figures, and even stains, they could create their work. According to Dierssen, "the cerebral cortex has a lot to do with cognitive abilities and activities that reach great development in humans, such as personality, consciousness, abstract thought, perception and language" (2019, pp. 72-73). Each child tends to demonstrate their essence through artistic works, which, no matter how abstract and unclear they looked, have a story behind them.

Painting as an art greatly influences the educational field, since it allows the development of different factors such as motor skills, perception, increased expressive capacity and the improvement of creativity and imagination. According to Moreno, "we see that there is a context in

which spontaneous (undirected) expression is allowed, in a space of trust and security, in which the subject knows that he or she will not be judged or questioned" (2016, p. 90). Thanks to the intervention of art in education, students can develop in a better way, developing all their abilities, improving them, and putting them into practice, without fear of participating and with a great desire to show their art.

Discussion And Conclusion

The main purpose of this work was based on demonstrating the relationship between the arts and cognitive development through their stimulation, in children of the Community of Peripa and in response to this, it was possible to verify that there is a close relationship between the arts in their different types and the cognitive stimulation of children of the Community of Peripa.

From the development of the different activities, the children were demonstrating attitudes corresponding to cognitive, motor, linguistic and social development, which contributes to their integral development.

In relation to the first research question, How does theater influence the cognitive stimulation of children in the Peripa commune?, it is considered that theater promotes stimulation and the ability to internalize, perceive, express and communicate with our inner being. In such a way that creativity and the ability to express themselves are developed. If we focus further, theater seeks to generate a positive change in mental agility, develops psychomotor skills, increases the empathy of children and young people in a community. On the other hand, theatre leaves a message for spectators and for those who perform, creating spaces for reflection on inclusion, socialisation, etc.

García, cited in Orellana Alvarado (2018), highlights that the importance of the arts lies in the fact that they promote the development of graphic expression, improve and enhance psychomotor and affective skills in children.

With respect to the second research question, How does theater contribute to the integral strengthening and significant learning in the children of the Peripa commune, it is considered that theater through the various representations allows cognitive development through the stimuli that the brain receives in its different areas, strengthening each of them and through playful activities, dynamic and meaningful?

The execution of the project coincides with what Esquivel Cruz (2018) expresses when he mentions that the presence of art in education, through art education and education through art, contributes decisively to the integral development of children and young people, while promoting dialogue and social cohesion.

In the project, it was observed that cognitive abilities and educational inclusion were reflected throughout the development of the activities. Each of these, focused on art, favored the integral, intellectual and moral formation of each and every one of the children who are part of the Peripa commune. Likewise, it was possible to observe the effort on the part of all the members who made up the artistic painting group, who, in addition, completed the activities successfully and new teachings.

To carry it out satisfactorily, preparation and training were necessary prior to the development of the activities. Through this, it is understood that learning to teach through strategies such as art is not an easy job, since it is necessary to think about who will receive this teaching and why it will be implemented. Therefore, being ready to answer a question and knowing how to recognize what the student wants to make known through their artistic works is something that must be part of the development of a project.

The design of the activities was successful, as it was planned to demonstrate the Peripa culture through art, therefore, through the artistic works created by the children who are part of it. Every movement, every gesture, every drawing, even every stain, were an important part of the development of the activities, which were carried out with great

enthusiasm and creativity, and were the fundamental basis to learn how this community works and how they interpret the world around them.

For cognitive stimulation and the development of an environment where there is educational inclusion, different strategies with artistic mediation were proposed. The union and respect between students during the activities was clear and demonstrated that, in addition to allowing the acquisition of new knowledge, it was encouraged and taught how, through art, an environment of inclusion is built where there was sharing and the illusion of being part of a group where no differences were noticed. only esteem and empathy.

The best way to create an environment where inclusion is witnessed is to demonstrate it. Therefore, it is advisable to be people who function as mirrors, since, if you want to teach through art, it is necessary, first, to know how to interpret it, and second, to show acts of respect, empathy and inclusion so that they are imitated; Likewise, it is also important to investigate, or create activities that use inclusion as a development perspective.

As mentioned in the development of the results, the plastic arts in the individual's childhood stage are of utmost importance to be able to develop their motor skills. In the dynamic, all the children had contact with painting and, through movements with their brushes and fingers, they let their creativity flow, which is in line with what Cabrera and Guamán state when they express that "children are able to create, explore and express the environment freely as they perceive it, developing their own concepts of objects through their manipulation" (2020, p. 29). Art allows children to develop fine motor skills, here they explore and experiment through touch and the visual medium, thus helping to generate critical and socio-affective thinking.

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