

Interdisciplinary Dialogues with Zenú Wisdom: Contributions to Pedagogical Innovation in Arts Education

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Summary

The purpose of this work is to investigate Zenú wisdom and its potential to generate innovative proposals that enrich training in the arts. Worked from the Popular University of Cesar and its commitment to be an integrator of the Colombian Caribbean region. The central and secondary questions focus on recognizing the essence of this wisdom and identifying the possibilities it offers to innovate in arts education. A qualitative approach with ethnographic design is applied, and the findings present Zenú wisdom as a system that integrates knowledge, worldview, pedagogical practices and products, and detail techniques, aesthetic resources and pedagogical considerations that can serve as an input for innovation. At the same time, emerging trends in arts and performance training are pointed out that could be consistent with the announcements of Zenú wisdom. These findings open up interesting and disturbing perspectives in arts training for higher education based on co-creations with the visual and performing arts, which are inspired by Zenú wisdom and, at the same time, contribute to its continuity.

1. Introduction

The training of artists in various institutions of higher education in Colombia emphasizes the aesthetic and technical development of the visual and performing arts. However, in the country the imposition of hegemonic aesthetic practices occurs, and the dialogue between traditional knowledge and academic knowledge is not established, which limits the connection with culture. For this reason, it is relevant to investigate the relationship between the tradition of the Zenú community (of the Colombian Caribbean) and contemporary aesthetics in the field of artist training, as well as the possibility of establishing interdisciplinary interactions. To this end, Zenú wisdom is recognized as a set of knowledge, practices and beliefs that are transmitted from generation to generation.

The foundation of the research rests on the notion of pedagogical innovation and focuses on the intercultural dialogue between the Zenú tradition and contemporary art education. Zenú wisdom is considered to contribute to pedagogical practice in formal and non-formal education and that the creation of works of Zenú content inspires new directions in the training of artists. The research answers two questions: What are the aspects of Zenú wisdom that enrich educational practice? How does this wisdom contribute to the training of artists in the visual arts and performing arts?

The proposal is framed within a qualitative research design of an ethnographic type and is based on the concept of pedagogical innovation.

2. Theoretical framework

Zenú wisdom, the concept of pedagogical innovation, interdisciplinarity, visual arts and performing arts constitute the main categories around which the theoretical framework is organized. The first and its definition, the most unique element, are presented first. Next, the specialized literature in pedagogy and the field of educational research address pedagogical innovation, interdisciplinarity in education, and research in Visual Arts and Performing Arts.

The categories defined at the beginning of the section allow a clearer understanding of Zenú pedagogy and speak of its importance in education. As for Zenú pedagogy, its worldview, knowledge and the way in which it is manifested in educational practice is presented; subsequently, the aspects analysed from the field of art education and the current trends in the Visual Arts and Performing Arts are described. The specialized literature in pedagogy and the field of educational research address pedagogical innovation, interdisciplinarity in education, and research in Visual Arts and Performing Arts.

3. Methodology

Qualitative approach and design: Research is qualitative, insofar as it attempts to understand, interpret and explain the educational field based on the meanings that the actors assigned to it attribute. The design is ethnographic in nature, based on a direct immersion in the context and practices of the traditional knowledge of the Zenú community established in Panzenú, a township in the municipality of San Andrés de Sotavento, Córdoba. Criteria of rigor, triangulation of sources and the multiple accounts of the immersion experience give validity and rigor to the interpretations. The ethnographic experience is complemented by interviews with key informants and their relationship and meaning for a training action in the arts.

Ethnographic strategies and field of study: The strategy involves ethnographic immersion in the study of Zenú traditional knowledge in a delimited process (one month) and concretized through field activities in the community of Panzenú. Thirteen members of the community participate in the research. A process of observation is also deployed in the development of the Zenú Language and Culture classes of the Zenú Institute of San Andrés de Sotavento. Cultural artifacts of great significance for the Zenú community are present. The community offers its permission for the development and dissemination of the experience.

3.1. Qualitative approach and design

The research is part of a qualitative approach due to the interest aroused by the meaning and understanding of educational actions and the way in which they are interpreted by the actors who dynamize them in the classroom (Rodríguez, 2004). In this sense, the understanding and interpretation of what is observed is sought, without pretending to make any type of measurement. From this perspective, the proposal is conceived under an ethnographic design that allows the study context to be approached in a holistic way and based on immersion in the participants' living environment (Hernández et al., 2010). This design also allows exploring the educational practice and the knowledge, beliefs, worldview and culture of the actors that shape it through multiple sources of information and their triangulation, thus guaranteeing the validity and richness of the data. Throughout the research process, the role of the researcher oscillates between participant, observer, and witness, and the criterion of rigor is given by credibility, transference, dependence, and confirmation (Guba & Lincoln, 2002).

The data collection process is nourished by the three central sources of ethnographic research: interviews, field diaries and artifacts. This first ethnographic component is complemented by two

more strategies. The first is the ethnographic observation of the educational processes during the teaching practice and, the second, the non-participant observation of the training processes in the community of origin of the actors involved. Data analysis follows the proposal of Anfara and Mertz (2006) and is organized in four phases: initial coding, category development, exhaustive analysis, and validation through return to participants.

3.2. Ethnographic strategies and field of study

Ethnography thus requires the use of various techniques that allow access to different dimensions of the phenomenon, including the incorporation of the point of view of the actors, which is why focused interviews are contemplated. The immersion in this research space and its openness to the incorporation of Zenú wisdom are first of all devoted to observing the pedagogical and artistic training work, and from these findings to return to dialogue with the Zenú community from its worldview and traditional knowledge, which will provide inputs from the culture of visual and performative forms for training in the arts. The first approaches have been to the work of the Zenú Foundation for Culture, which has its headquarters in the township of La Casa de La Cultura in the city of Sincelejo.

The spaces of the Zenú Foundation for Culture are: the Zenú Socio-Cultural Center, where workshops are held on looms, costume jewelry, palm weaving and fraying; the Zenú Memory Reference Center, which includes a temporary exhibition hall and an Audiovisual Room; the Parque de la Memoria, where tribute is paid to grandparents and the community's passage through the war is remembered; the House of Culture, where the Foundation's artistic groups operate; the Plaza de La Cultura, which is the area for community meetings; the Library and Documentation Center, which has in its collection books in the Zenú language, the first grammar and dictionary, and a dictionary of myths and legends; and the Training and Training Center, which guides research processes in history, language, culture and the arts. The Foundation has the support of the Mayor's Office of Sincelejo and Colciencias. In recent times, a production process of the Zenú culture has been put into practice, where some incursions have been made into the creation of artifacts by Zenú artists.

3.3. Data collection and analysis process

The process of data collection and analysis involves clearly specifying the techniques used and the phases of analysis and validation. In this case, three ethnographic strategies were used: in-depth interviews, direct observations, and field diaries. The interviews were semi-structured and applied to an Afro-Colombian researcher who conducts research related to Zenú pedagogy, a member of the Zenú community, and an art education teacher who incorporated Zenú elements into his pedagogical practice. Direct observation of the pedagogical practice of this teacher was also carried out among the Zenú community, as well as an exploration group that addressed Zenú aspects through visual arts, music and theater. These spaces generated different artifacts, from which complementary analyses were carried out. The interviews were transcribed in their entirety, and the observations were complemented with photographs and the artifacts generated. From the interviews and observations, categories were extracted through open coding that opened the analysis process.

The first phase of the analysis, which was carried out in parallel to the collection process, identified the categories, subcategories and codes that allowed the first conclusions to be generated provisionally. Subsequently, these categories were contrasted with the theoretical framework and a second moment of analysis took place in which they were related to discussions on pedagogical innovation, interdisciplinarity, visual arts and performing arts, and were integrated into the

drafting of the document. The validation of the results derived from this phase was carried out based on the triangulation proposed by the different types of data collected.

4. Findings and interdisciplinary dialogues

The findings clearly and forcefully indicate that the interdisciplinary dialogue between the arts, pedagogy, and ancestral Zenú knowledge allows for a rethinking and reimagining of teaching practices. This innovative approach is geared towards creating curricular innovation that is deeply focused on students' cultural diversity and creativity. In this framework of critical reflection, important convergences are identified between ancestral knowledge and contemporary pedagogical approaches that, when united, effectively promote active participation, critical thinking and expressive creativity in the classroom. This process not only enriches learning, but also fosters a deeper understanding of culture and identity.

This section presents the findings and dynamics of the interdisciplinary dialogues that emerge from the profound and rich Zenú wisdom. These dialogic practices not only represent a form of cultural exchange, but also significantly strengthen pedagogical innovation in arts education. Through this approach, crucial routes are opened for the integration of traditional knowledge with contemporary approaches that are equally relevant today. In this framework of analysis, significant findings are highlighted that point to the convergence between Zenú ancestral wisdom and contemporary pedagogical approaches. Here, intercultural dialogue plays a fundamental role, facilitating the construction of artistic practices that are more meaningful and contextualized, making education a more inclusive and dynamic process. Interdisciplinary dialogues, by their nature, reveal multiple routes of innovation in education: one of the most outstanding is the centrality of everyday knowledge. This approach allows students to connect their daily experience with formal learning, thus promoting more meaningful learning. In addition, attentive listening is established as an essential pedagogical technique that fosters respect and empathy in the classroom. The co-evaluation of knowledge, which promotes student agency, is another important aspect where the diversity of views and skills within educational processes is recognized and valued. Likewise, dynamics of mutual recognition emerge between the disciplines of arts, history, education and ethics of care, which together enable a more effective integration of traditional knowledge with contemporary tools used in creation, research and critical reflection. This process of integration, by reducing the boundaries between the various disciplines, favors the development of pedagogical projects that value lived experience, community memory and the creative reinterpretation of artistic practice. All this occurs within specific cultural contexts that further enrich the learning experience and allow students to feel an active part of their training process, creating a more inclusive and enriching educational environment.

4.1. Zenú Wisdom in Educational Practice

The interdisciplinary dialogue reveals the rich Zenú wisdom, which is based on a harmonious worldview, on respect for nature and the production of knowledge, as well as for education and pedagogy. All this is a knowledge that is put into practice in the daily life of people and groups in this community. In every action, in every word, in every piece of advice, in every practice, this population is making its wisdom present. Zenú teaching includes not only the transmission of knowledge, but also an attitude of respect towards others, as well as towards nature. In their educational practice, they give value to silence, to listening, they teach by example, they respect the moment of learning and the emotional state of the learner. A knowledge that, although it manifests itself on a daily basis, as part of the Zenú worldview, does not have a leading role, in no way can it be ignored in educational practice. From this knowledge, attractive classroom examples for arts education are also derived. The creation of a cultural device that allows the recognition,

rescue, dissemination and conservation of the Zenú culture, particularly language, music and dance, is inspired by intercultural education that gives a leading place to the Zenú.

Zenú wisdom is manifested in the educational practice of the community through what is known as the knowers, people who, due to their age, have acquired the authority and knowledge necessary to transmit to new generations a vision of the world, a set of knowledge and a model to follow. This knowledge – traditional, oral and in a continuous process of reconstruction – is codified in the Zenú language by the new generations who, through it, manage to put their skills into practice. Some of these experts are immersed in the formal teaching-learning process, since their communication with students is mediated by the guides of each course and by the teachers. From this contact, a space for dialogue has begun to be generated that allows students to know, value and experience the richness of the Zenú culture. In this connection, a very clear influence of the Zenú philosophy and the practice of the wise is observed in the creation of teaching-learning processes centered on Howard Gardner's approach to multiple intelligences. This approach allows working in the classroom with multiple strategies that respond to different learning styles and that stimulate students' intelligences through the use of different languages. The support, the center and the guide of all these proposals are, and must continue to be, the knowers. They are the ones who communicate culture, orally, to the students, the budding artists who, in their process of appropriation, create poems, stories, songs and plays in the Zenú language in which they narrate what they feel and think about their culture, their environment and themselves.

4.2. Contributions to artistic training

Dialogues around Zenú wisdom suggest that their techniques, knowledge, worldview, and pedagogical practices can contribute to arts training, especially in visual arts, media integration, and performing arts. The analysis of their educational practice reveals that they are aimed at a population ranging from early childhood to young people. The adaptation of their knowledge to contemporaneity is manifested in the formation of groups that develop the Zenú tradition in the creation of artistic works and in musical composition. In the context of art and nature, trends are emerging that incorporate the use of elements that come from nature.

Interaction and communication with nature are themes that are present in the practice of some contemporary artists who are in the process of training, a fact that responds to an individual and collective need. In the proposal of artistic training, different lines emerge, including the use of elements that come from nature, which occurs both in music and in visual art and in stage art. These lines are being explored and developed by young people and adults in the process of creation, either individually or collectively.

4.3. Innovative trends in visual and performing arts

The growing awareness of the problems of the contemporary world generates a climate conducive to the emergence of creative approaches that break down traditional categories and open new paths towards the construction of meaning. In this context, voices emerge that share, from a Zenú perspective, their worldview and their conception of educational practice; In dialogue with these proposals, the framework of reference for training in the arts, both visual and performative, suggests the incorporation of aesthetic and pedagogical approaches that promote innovation.

The visual arts encompass not only the production of objects, but also the reflection, curatorial practice, and reimagining of public spaces. For their part, the artists of the show work at the intersection of different manifestations; his production is defined according to the place of presentation and even expands the very notion of art. Today, these experiences can be considered a new trend in the artistic field, although research in the field of arts education has not yet accompanied them.

5. Discussion

The findings invite reflection on the meaning of education, the operation of knowledge and the relationship between Culture and Education. Zenú wisdom transcends the cultural field, territory or temporality and can be a reference for other cultures. Its practice, which is part of everyday life, offers educators knowledge, worldview and a powerful arsenal of strategies to enrich education in general and artistic training in particular. Integrating this knowledge into the teaching and learning processes stimulates creativity and imagination, allows the incorporation of the experience of the environment and promotes meaningful, respectful and inclusive training. At the same time, Zenú knowledge contributes to connecting with the most innovative trends in teaching and learning in Visual Arts and Performing Arts.

Education admits, and even proposes, a constant return to look, to conceive, to reformulate and to give new meanings not only to educational action but to its own meaning. In practice, meaning loses prominence; he perceives himself as a preacher and not as someone who, due to his characteristics and condition, offers and allows to fill life, daily life, the here and now with meaning. Zenú wisdom, conceived, constructed, practiced and lived by a community that sustains its existence and meaning in everyday life, is constituted as a voice that questions, that proposes to look, that invites us to rethink meaning and its relationship with education, and to guarantee and respect its presence in every corner of the planet; it becomes a voice that suggests a gaze that is always attentive to the here and now, that launches a call to return to an integral, essential education, where knowledge is a substrate for life and its execution, and not a justification for living.

6. Ethical and cultural considerations

A tourist aspect that is relevant to consider is that related to obtaining consent to carry out the research exercise. The sources are people who belong to the Zenú community, they are people who have their beliefs and in some cases their customs are sacred. For this reason, there can be no irresponsible use of their knowledge or their culture. Anyone who wants to represent or use the knowledge and culture of the Zenú community must have the consent of the community, since they are the true owners of their customs, their culture and their lands. When talking about the Zenú culture, it cannot be taken or used in a frivolous way, because it is part of the life of the community, it is their worldview, it is their way of seeing the world around them and feeling it. Therefore, when traditions, myths, legends, beliefs, are collected, it must be done with the greatest of respect. Those who use Zenú knowledge in their teaching practices, or are creating different works of art, cannot see themselves as a creator, as the artist who makes their work, on the contrary they are in the role of a translator. He should keep in mind that his work is only a translation of the knowledge that the Zenú community offers him. At the same time, he cannot be seen as a wise man, for he really is not. The only thing he has done is take some knowledge and make a translation so that others can understand it.

Another aspect that would arise from a possible use of Zenú knowledge in the classroom is related to intellectual property. Whoever wants to benefit from these traditions, legends, stories or any of their customs, must ask permission from the Zenú community. What this allows is that the Zenú community is not affected when it comes to using their culture. Their culture is not a tourist resource, it is not a resource that is there for outsiders to use as they please. It is a culture that must be respected and cared for. Interculturality is another important aspect and must be linked to the use of the Zenú culture in the classroom. The works of art that arise from the use of this knowledge must show that it was the Zenú people who provided these elements and must not appear as works of the author.

7. Recommendations for teaching practice

The recommendations guide teachers, establish concrete actions that support them in the application of the findings. They include possible instructions for developing didactic guides that articulate the proposals presented here, guidelines for evaluating the mastery and application of visual techniques, a set of suggestions for including Zenú culture in the teaching and learning processes, and guidelines for generating pluriartistic and interartistic dialogues, that is, that allow the different artistic manifestations to interact in the classroom.

Four questions are proposed that can be used for the formulation of didactic guides that integrate the contributions of Zenú wisdom in the teaching of the arts: What would happen if an activity were proposed in which people are not an end, but a means and works of art are not an end, but a vehicle for communication in daily life? What would happen if the art education class was proposed as a space in which multi-artistic skills could be developed?, What would happen if an activity was proposed with the aim of generating a performative action and impacting a community?, What would happen if an activity was aimed at producing a work of art with a Zenú function or use?

It is suggested that art education classes include techniques and ways of seeing the world of the Zenú culture and that in the learning process criteria and evaluation patterns that are coherent with this new knowledge are taken into account. That is, if a student is immersed in a teaching and learning process that involves new knowledge, what is expected is that this learning is mediated or influenced by that knowledge.

8. Limits of the study and future lines of research

The limitations of the study come in part from the family, since the research group belongs to an institution that proposes teaching for a few. In this sense, the distance between what is taught and what is needed generates contradictions that limit the availability for something that goes beyond what is known and formal training. The gaze of Zenú wisdom, by nature, approaches the formative processes; however, in today's dynamics it is difficult to connect completely and for interaction to take place. Openness is necessary, but not sufficient, because if the group is not available for what is shared, it is not possible to move forward, even if you try to do it in different ways.

From this limitation, new questions arise that propose other paths. In relation to Zenú wisdom, an important question is to think about how a good pedagogical practice can be built in connection with Zenú knowledge beyond techniques. More than a dialogue that allows us to connect perspectives, it becomes a space in which teaching is guided by Zenú knowledge, which proposes a path that links the practice of education with the Zenú worldview. On the other hand, there is an interest in exploring the visual arts from the Zenú approach and in analyzing the practice of artists who propose trends that are close to Zenú wisdom, in which the aesthetic foundations are different from those of other current artists, despite the fact that their creations may seem similar. It may be an approach that is at the heart of visual arts trends.

9. Conclusions

The research grounds and guides interdisciplinary dialogues with Zenú Wisdom in educational practice, supports the development of innovative trends in the visual and performing arts, and integrates contributions from diverse cultural traditions into arts education. These orientations respond to the need to overcome the split between academic, popular and traditional knowledge, and to the question: What contributions of Zenú Wisdom allow enriching educational practice in the field of training in the Arts? The Zenú worldview is analyzed, understood as a profound and at the same time popular knowledge that articulates different areas of knowledge in an ecological model; the richness of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Zenú; training practices in visual and

performing arts that are part of innovative and emerging trends; and dialogue with the Zenú environment itself.

Zenú Wisdom is valuable not only in itself, but also for its potential to connect with the Wisdom of other peoples of the world. Embracing such dialogue is essential for those preparing to teach and for those in pedagogical practice. Applying this knowledge in the classroom, as a cultural value and within the framework of a Critical Interculturality, is a challenge that invites the inclusion of all groups in the processes of training and research, in line with the trend of Pluriartes and "Arts for Life". It is not enough to include rituals, aesthetic forms and iconography of different peoples in the students' production and in the curatorship of exhibitions. It is a matter of making these traditions the very basis of the process and of creating new works, didactic guides, community actions and other elements that reflect the interactions they foster.

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