

The Research-Exhibition Method: Collection, Curatorship and Setting Up of Scenes

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Abstract: The relation between science and art has shown potential regarding the investigative contexts of the human and social sciences. Thus, this study aimed to describe the Research-Exhibition method, a theoretical-methodological proposition developed as an innovative proposal for document analysis, especially of documents resulting from participant research and/or other participatory methodologies. Designed from a documental collection referring to a project to continuously train teachers, Research-Exhibition is sustained by three dimensions: the work with the documents; that of setting up the scene in dialogue with the work of Jacques Rancière; and that of the place of researcher-curators. These dimensions enable subjects and collectives’ singularities, memories, affections, and subjectivation processes to be brought to the exhibition by various documentary sources.

Keywords: research methods, psychology, documentation, teacher education

O Método da Pesquisa-Exposição: Acervo, Curadoria e a Montagem das Cenas

Resumo: As relações entre ciência e arte têm apresentado potencialidades no que diz respeito aos contextos investigativos das ciências humanas e sociais. Neste sentido, este estudo teve por objetivo apresentar o método da Pesquisa-Exposição. Essa proposição teórico-metodológica foi desenvolvida como uma proposta inovadora de análise de documentos, principalmente documentos resultantes de pesquisas participantes e/ou outras metodologias participativas. Desenhada a partir da criação de um acervo documental referente a um projeto de formação continuada de professores, a Pesquisa-Exposição é sustentada em três dimensões: a do trabalho com os documentos; a da montagem da cena, em diálogo com a obra de Jacques Rancière; e a do lugar do pesquisador-curador. Essas dimensões possibilitam trazer à exposição singularidades, memórias, afetos e processos de subjetivação de sujeitos e coletivos, por intermédio das diversas fontes documentais.

Palavras-chave: métodos de pesquisa, psicologia, documentação, formação de professores

El Método de Investigación-Exposición: Recopilación, Curación y Puesta en Escena

Resumen: La relación entre ciencia y arte ha mostrado potencialidades con respecto a los contextos investigativos de las ciencias humanas y sociales. En ese sentido, este estudio tuvo como objetivo presentar el método Investigación-Exposición. Esta propuesta teórico-metodológica se desarrolló como una propuesta innovadora para el análisis de documentos, principalmente resultantes de la investigación participante y/u otras metodologías participativas. Diseñada a partir de la creación de un acervo documental referente a un proyecto de formación continua de docentes, la Investigación-Exposición se sustenta en tres dimensiones: el trabajo con los documentos; la puesta en escena, en diálogo con la obra de Jacques Rancière; y la del lugar del investigador-curador. Estas dimensiones permiten traer a la exposición singularidades, memorias, afectos y procesos de subjetivación de sujetos y colectivos mediante diversas fuentes documentales.

Palabras clave: metodología de la investigación, psicología, documentación, formación de profesores

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This study aimed to describe the Research-Exposure method. This theoretical-methodological proposal was developed as an innovative project to analyze documents, especially those resulting from surveys and/or other participatory methodologies. The driving element that methodologically outlined Research-Exhibition was a documentary collection consisting of documents from

a continuous training program for teachers. This project, guided by the perspective of historical-cultural psychology, produced a significant volume of documents from the activities proposed to teachers, which will be described later. These documentary sources offer encounters with life stories, work, memories, and practices of different times and spaces— aspects that may be brought to the exhibition.

The term “exhibition,” a key concept borrowed from the field of Museology, has historical constructions about its meaning. The word exhibition means both the act of exhibiting, what it proposes to exhibit (objects, works, etc.), and where it will exhibit it (the place). The word, originally from Latin, “possessed, at first and at the same time, the figurative sense of explanation, of exposition, the literal sense of an exposition ... and the general sense of display” (Desvallées & Mairesse, 2013, p. 42). Over the centuries, especially in France, the word *exposition* comes to relate to the term presentation, finally being associated to works of art.

When we dialogue with the concept of exhibition we understand it as narrative, which narrative is composed of choices that “point to the desired ideas and images and establish, through the senses, dialogues with the public.” (Bordinhão et al., 2017, p. 8). Bordinhão et al. (2017) use the figure of the iceberg (commonly referred to in illustrations about something that is both apparent and hidden) to deem the exhibition as the part on the surface (the tip of the iceberg due to the whole process of assembly) and refer to the storage and conservation of objects, aspects hidden from the public.

However, from the perspective of the narrative, we can understand the tip of the iceberg as a portrait, a fragment which is constituted and sustained in macro conditions (which are not necessarily hidden but implied), i.e., the narrative on display and its singular events are related “to other planes of culture, social practices, circulating discourses, and institutional spheres.” (Góes, 2000, p. 15).

This way of thinking about exhibition as a narrative also dialogues with the indexing method proposed by Ginzburg (1976/2006). The historian, when poring over a documentary collection, came to know the story of Menocchio, a miller tried by the Inquisition for theorizing the origin of the world in a way considered profane. By what the miller said in his trial, “Even if Menocchio’s opinions grew out of his own predicament, they ended by becoming much broader in scope.” (Ginzburg, 1976/2006, p. 41) and the investigation made by Ginzburg using this evidence led him to know a popular culture.

Thus, Research-Exhibition proposes to focus on experiences, rather than only subjects. Experiences that go beyond the records of “great men, events, ... and fast-moving history: that is political, diplomatic, military history” (Le Goff, 1990, p. 541). It also deals with the records of all humans in any time and space as a testimony “of the history, of the time, of the society that produced it” (Le Goff, 1990, p. 547).

It is worth restating that Research-Exhibition is not an a priori method but a proposition that was drawn from the encounter with the documents of a project to continuously

train teachers. Vygotsky (1978/1991) dedicated himself to analyzing processes, rather than only objects in isolation, offering the understanding of method as a product of investigations. Research-Exhibition, in this sense, configured a path: in the encounter with the collection and in the possibilities that unfolded from it.

To describe the Research-Exposure method, we will discuss its three constitutive dimensions: the first of which deals with the work with documents and the understanding of documentary methodologies as a way of recording the history and subjectivation processes of various subjects. The second is the conceptual interlocution in Rancière and Jdey (2021) and the montage of the scene, which offers us a different reading about these processes of subjectification, making visible the displacement of the bodies from the place in which they were designated. And the third is the place of the researcher-curator, whose theoretical and ethical-affective lens enables the curation of the documents on display.

Working with Documents

Documentary methodologies, although largely present in the field of history for example, have been little explored by other areas of the humanities and social sciences. In general, we are introduced to documentary research by a chapter in books of research methodology that often link the understanding of a document to that which is written and (above all) official (Salvatori et al., 2022). A movement of historians known as the Annales School expanded the concepts of what constitutes a document and thus, the relevance of considering various documentary sources as a possibility of contextualizing subjects, groups, cultures, etc., without instituting a hierarchy of knowledge (Silva et al., 2019).

The activity of recording every-day or historical events is not exclusive to the 21st century. Throughout the history of mankind, the memory of the peoples prior to writing, Prehistory, Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and others has been preserved in records of various kinds: the oral history of inscriptions, objects, writing itself, and works of art until we created the machines and technologies that brought us here, in which practically everything can be recorded in a personal way by mobile devices (Le Goff, 1990).

However, talking about memory production entails us to question the memory of who we are talking about. Le Goff (1990, p. 476) points out that, despite our achievements regarding the collective memory of humanity, we are looking at an issue that is also one of power and of “struggle for the domination of remembrance and tradition.” The author proposes to researchers that they seek to democratize collective memory, aiming at the liberation of all men, rather than their subjection to the memory of others.

As mentioned, the driving force behind the development of Research-Exhibition was a documentary collection of a teacher continuous training project, which promoted courses with basic education teachers in a municipality in southern

Brazil in 2020 and 2021. The described collection is a compilation of about 665 documents: texts, images, audios, and videos that marked the participation of 60 teachers in the project in question (30 in each year). Each participant attended a 10-meeting course organized by thematic axes that sought to contemplate different dimensions of teaching (biographical, work, conceptual, aesthetic, and collective axis). The proposal to investigate these documents was approved by the Research Ethics Committee under opinion no. 5,174,155 (CAAE No. 53355621.3.0000.5366).

Although conceived in 2019, the project only began in 2020, i.e., the meetings that were designed to take place in person did so online and the first 30 participants experienced the journey amidst the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. The possibility of offering an online training course enabled the constitution of the documentary collection because, in addition to the audio and video recordings of the calls made with participants and the records written by the assistant researchers who conducted the meetings, it was also possible to document teachers' productions following creation and inventiveness proposals (photographs, collages, poetry, audiovisual productions, among others). The project in question welcomed stories of life, work, experiences, reflections, and affections since it starts from the perspective of teachers as active subjects of both their practice and training (Oliveira et al., 2021).

For Historical-Cultural Theory, "the relationship we establish with reality is always and necessarily mediated by culture, by the values characteristic of the social and historical moment in which we live, as well as by our life history" (Zanella, 2004, p. 132). Based on this perspective, the proposed activities were thought assuming the links between who one is and what one does. School situations relate, on the one hand, what belongs to the context itself, and on the other, the way teachers experience them, attributing meaning to the presented environment (Vigotski, 2001/2018).

In the biographical axis, participants were invited to narrate their trajectories based on the question "How did you become a teacher?" In the work axis, the discussion about the conditions of teaching (particularly marked by the pandemic in that first year) was mediated by participants' photographs portraying their work. The conceptual axis worked with concepts that dialogued with what had been brought by participants up to that point, i.e., both concepts and interlocutions were also singularized from the four meetings until then. Themes such as social inequality, social exclusion, inclusion, affectivity, playfulness, among others, were discussed in the meetings of this axis based on authors such as Paulo Freire, Lev Semionovitch Vygotsky, and Bader Burihan Sawaia. The invitation to creation and aesthetic experimentation in the aesthetic axis resulted in diverse productions by the teachers regarding their participation in the project based on resources of their choice (drawings, paintings, collages, songs, poems, photos, etc.). Finally, in the collective axis, the meeting between teachers in the project-course, although virtual, provided participants with opportunities to dialogue and share their formative experience.

This way of offering continuous training (which welcomes life stories and invites creation) resulted in a vast documentary production based on the narratives produced by assistant researchers (such as field diaries and transcriptions) and the images and videos created by participating teachers. This vast production registered two relevant aspects: the first of which refers to the project itself, focused on participants' memories, affections, and images; and the second is how the documentation of this formative proposal offers us possibilities to study experiences that are both subjective and collective.

As Le Goff (1990), Ginzburg (1976/2006) also pays attention to the relevance of looking at lives considered unimportant to official histories. The author says that these biographies devoid of interest become justly representative, as if they were "a microcosm, the characteristics of an entire social stratum in a specific historical period" (Ginzburg, 1976/2006, p. 20). As Freitas (2018) points out, in times when the work of teachers has been subjected to a discarding logic, it is indispensable to see teaching through lenses other than that of capitalist hegemony.

Thus, the Research-Exhibition montage is linked to this other look at the document. A look that transcends the responses of research scripts as content to be analyzed in view of the evidence, fragments, and other productions as a possibility of unveiling the experience of being a teacher in the contemporary world. It is worth pointing out that this work requires an inference and interpretative reading from those who intend to do so as documents do not speak by themselves. It is in the encounter between researcher and documentary sources that they are shown to be "chatty," as per Cellard (2008, p. 296). These two dimensions, interpretive reading and the interpretive reader, will be discussed in the following section.

The Montage of the Scene

Given the numerous possibilities facing a collection with a relatively large volume of documents, what must be brought to the exhibition? What guides such choices? What "montages" are possible? The concept of scene, proposed by the philosopher Rancière and Jdey (2021), offered the conceptual subsidy for this purpose.

The research scenes, or rather, the scene montage configures Research-Exhibition. Not only of documents but of the scenes in them that enable the understanding of the complexity of an experience. The scene, therefore, is not a simple event that presents and explains itself, say Rancière and Jdey (2021). The scene is a narrative composition assembled by the researcher and given in a singular episode that, at the same time, is amalgamated into a plot of experiences.

The scene is linked to the creative and resistant work of the fictional narrative because it promotes a multiplicity of worlds and forms of experimentation that are not our own and, therefore, enable us to think, say the world, and reflect on it in another way (Marques, 2021, pp. 51-52).

Rancière (1996/2018) claims the existence of an ordering logic that distributes bodies in space. This ordering defines and puts into agreement “the ways of being, the ways of doing, and the ways of saying that suit each one” (p. 41) — which the author will call the police order. The police order is an order of the sensible and the sayable that assigns certain tasks to certain subjects.

In contrast, what the author will name as political activity breaks with this definition of the parts to reconfigure the sensitive. When the author meets with the literary production of workers, described in his work “Proletarians Nights” (1988), he captures “the equality of any speaking being with any other speaking being” (Rancière, 1996/2018, p. 44). Rancière (1988) suggests that, after their exhausting daily journeys, tailors, carpenters, and artisans produce another work — poetry, prose, and newspapers. By providing visibilities for the experience of the working class that differ from those offered by the bias of exploitation and precariousness, the author makes visible possibilities toward the “suspension of the ancestral hierarchy that subordinates those who dedicate themselves to working with their own hands to those who have been contemplated with the privilege of thought” (Rancière, 1988, p. 10). This configures political activity in the displacement of bodies from the place to which they have been assigned.

In this sense, the scene aims to make visible the subversion of these distributions, extracting “a singular episode from the endless chain of causes and effects to give it its double power of condensation of a whole web of experience” (Rancière & Jdey, 2021, p. 27). The existence of the scene by itself fails to solve the inequalities that constitute human relations but offers the opportunity to attest an equality of intelligences, changing “cartographies of the perceptible and the thinkable.” (Marques & Prado, 2018, p. 20).

The context in which Research-Exhibition was designed also has a plot that constitutes and crosses the experience of being a teacher. Neoliberal policies have flattened the teaching experience by defamatory discourses that reduce the work of teachers to the prism of precariousness (Freitas, 2018). This conjuncture determined to teachers that passion, in its condition, is forbidden (Rancière, 2009). In this sense, Research-Exhibition proposes the visibility of the subversion of this condition by the montage of the scene. The existence of problems inherent to the teaching work is not denied, on the contrary. Although the obstacles of the profession, such as work overload and state disinvestment, appear in the documents, they also contain pleasure, affections, ideas, creations, collectivity, and criticality. Rather than considering the aspects given as negative, it refers to putting other powers on the scene.

Freitas (2018) points out the gravity of letting the educational reforms we are experiencing overshadow the possibilities of coping with them as, although they obfuscate, they evince the “solutions” that are of interest to other sectors, such as the business one. Thus, making conditions of teaching work that we do not know a priori visible is fundamental. The montage of the scene, therefore, enables the sight of what until then is not perceived or what is scrambled

by a common logic of reflection. This arrangement enables returning to subjects the audibility of their word to break with the explanatory order of science about workers, “which makes this activity visible and the other is not, that this word is understood as discourse and another as noise” (Rancière, 1996/2018, p. 43). Research-Exposure, therefore, rather than necessarily changing this field under discussion, aims to provoke the sensibilities of those who relate to the field.

The Researcher-Curator

As discussed earlier, document analysis requires inferences from those who make it, mobilized mainly by a theoretical-conceptual lens. It is necessary to analyze the documents in an interpretive work in view of the evidence, fragments, details, that may go unnoticed. Spink (2013) understands documentary sources as discursive practices and draws attention to the task of listening to what is known as “chances.” He says: “chance is an important element and should never be discarded, researchers in the field of meaning production learn to be permanent collectors of possibly pertinent materials” (Spink, 2013, p. 113).

In the Research-Exhibition proposition, the researcher is also a curator. As one who assembles a narrative with documents (in this case, 655 documents), choices must be made and others avoided. Curatorial work, according to the segment of the field of arts that deals with exhibitions, “identifies strands, groups data, and creates connections aiming to pass on to the public the feeling or meaning provoked in the encounter with the work” (Salcedo del Castillo, 2021, p. 75). This work of grouping and connections, although guided by theoretical perspectives, is also made of affects, senses, and meanings that are sometimes unintentional.

All research uses procedures and techniques that enable it to focus on the investigated subjects and contexts. It refers to a movement “of looking, cutting, collating, disassembling, reassembling, analyzing” that requires “aesthetic relations based on a sensibility that makes it possible not only to see but fundamentally to look, admire, and problematize reality” (Zanella, 2013, p. 49). The process of research is a process of creation and research is work. As Zanella (2013) claims:

A work that reinvents life itself rather than just explaining or understanding it. A testimony of a scientific practice for which there is no alibi: the discourse of the singular method is not presented as its foundation but the ethical and aesthetic choices of a researcher who reinvents themselves as well as the reality investigated in the research process itself (Zanella, 2013, p. 21).

Thus, the montage of the Research-Exhibition by a researcher-curator considers other readings beyond the strictly academic ones in its analytical procedures, which are entwined in the process of creation (Zonta & Zanella, 2021). This link between science, art, and life enables the horizontalization of what was historically constituted in a hierarchical way: scientific, artistic, and daily production (Zanella, 2013).

The exercise of exchanging science, art, and life is no easy task. It is precisely this overlapping of knowledge placed at the forefront that crosses us as researchers. As mentioned, it is necessary to break with the explanatory order of science about workers as these differences “serve the hierarchical exercises of power, the practices of curtailment and silencing, the consumer legitimation of some productions, and the marginalization of others” (Zanella, 2013, p. 47).

Research-Exhibition is constituted as a theoretical-methodological proposition in the face of the possibilities of studies with documents because it tensions the way we produce knowledge and mainly proposes the exercise of bringing to the exhibition, to the light, the power of the historical, cultural, and subjective details that resist in the fabric of subjects and collectives. Even with a fertile field of possibilities (such as a vast documentary collection), this proposition is intrinsic to the work of researcher-curators and their “commitment to the reality in which they live, their life and that of all” (Zanella, 2013, p. 48).

Therefore, the place of the researcher-curator is crossed by different aspects. It is an investigative place of relationships, affections, knowledge, responsibility, and commitment. Just as Salcedo del Castillo (2021) understands an exercise of artistic creation in the practice of curatorship, we understand the same movement in Research-Exhibition. We can claim that the main function of the researcher-curator is the production of visibility by creation. By making the teaching experience visible in Research-Exhibition from other perspectives, the documents in the collection open fissures in the established discourses about teachers’ work.

Final Considerations

Participatory research and methodologies in Psychology and in dialoguing areas such as Education have enabled the encounter with subjectivities, memories, and collectives by inventive and creative proposals. These productions go beyond the responses of investigative scripts. On the contrary, we are talking about images, texts, works, and biographical and institutional objects that enable us to understand subjectivation processes as much as traditional directed interviews. To look at documentary sources by an analytical work that contemplates the evidences and fragments of an experience that is both singular and collective is to consider each and every daily production as an integral part of the records of history and culture.

The Research-Exhibition method was designed with this perspective in view: as a possibility to analyze documentary collections from other views and perspectives. In addition to this look at the work with the documents, the method is also guided by proposing scene montages in dialogue with Jacques Rancière’s work. This conceptual proposition assumes that when one catches the narrative composition in the singularity of a scene, it is not necessary to make the translation in the

sense of explaining something or someone. The work of investigating is precisely to challenge readers so that they can see and hear what until then is ignored or shuffled by a common logic of reflection.

Research-Exhibition, in this sense, challenges us to reflect, in the first place, on the processes of knowledge production. The academic context inclines us to an explanatory will. These conceptual analytical effects constitute us as researchers. It takes a constant exercise of avoiding to speak for someone or explain someone or some experience.

To be a researcher-curator is to face collections and the possibilities that emerge from them and to make choices. The composition of the Research-Exhibition is crossed by a theoretical and ethical-affective lens that understands the investigative process as a creation. Research-Exhibition marks the presence of involved and sensitive researcher-curators to the singularities, details, and above all, the potency of life of the various subjects.

This method was designed in a context of emerging issues in the field of teacher education but goes beyond it. The dimensions that constitute Research-Exhibition were designed so that the method also offers a possibility for other contexts, experiences, subjects, and groups as a theoretical-methodological proposition committed to producing ethical, political knowledge that remains open to dialogue with other knowledge.

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