

Improving the well-being

of vulnerable young people through art



SUPPORTING PROFESSIONALS THROUGH
ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHY





The author warmly thanks the Fédération Léo Lagrange, the Public Aid Organisation funded by the Agence Française de Développement, the STEA association and the NGO Action Education, co-financed by the European Union, as well as all the people who supported this work, both in the implementation of the activities mentioned below, in the development and revision of this pedagogical guide. Warmest thanks also to the young people with whom we worked, enabling us to draw up this guide.

Author: **Albane Buriel**

Publisher: **Action Éducation - ISBN : 978-2-9592207-0-8**

Graphics and illustrations: **Joël Alessandra**

June 2024



ForeWord

WELCOME TO ALL OF YOU,

We are convinced that artistic and creative practices can improve the well-being of the young people we work with. The artistic approach is a flexible tool that can be used fruitfully throughout your projects and activities.

Culture and the arts «play an essential role in the development of the human imagination, creativity and self-expression, nurturing exploration, curiosity and expanding creative possibilities» (UNESCO, 2024). Artistic biography workshops* are a way of integrating artistic practices and creative games into educational activities for children and young people. This guide is aimed at professionals in the fields of psychosocial support, child protection and education, particularly in «out-of-school» contexts, as well as professionals in the artistic field, especially artists. The aim of this pedagogical guide is to support you, the professionals, in understanding your positions and practices and in implementing your projects and activities using the «artistic biography*».

The didactic* device of «artistic biography*» as a didactic* training tool was designed and tested as part of a doctorate in Education Sciences at Rennes 2 University in France. The research was conducted with professionals from the international section of the Fédération Léo Lagrange in partnership with the Public Aid Organization (PAO) in Iraq, and from the NGO Action Education in partnership with the association STEA in Romania. The aim of the thesis was to support professionals in non-formal (or out-of-school) education* with a view to transforming their professional practices* aimed at improving the well-being of young people in vulnerable situations*, through artistic biography*.

We hope you will find this guide useful in your work with vulnerable young people*, and that it will help to strengthen their well-being and resilience through art and creativity.

ALBANE BURIEL

Terms marked with an asterisk () are defined in the glossary on p. 24.*



Contents

General framework	5
WHY THIS PEDAGOGICAL GUIDE?	5
DID IT HELP YOU?	6
Artistic biography, an approach for the well-being of young people	7
CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC EDUCATION	7
ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHY	8
WELL-BEING THROUGH ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHY	10
How can the activities team* work together on a joint artistic project?	11
PREPARING AND PROVIDING FEEDBACK ON ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS	11
RECOGNISING EVERYONE'S SKILLS AND SHARING ROLES DURING THE WORKSHOPS	11
DEVELOP GOOD COOPERATION* BETWEEN THE TEAM AND THE YOUNG PEOPLE	12
How can artists and entertainers transmit a shared culture?	14
CONNECTING YOUNG PEOPLE TO THEIR CULTURE THROUGH ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHY	14
DEVELOPING SKILLS AND TALENTS BY PASSING ON PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE	14
EMPOWERMENT AND LINKS WITH THE COMMUNITY	15
How can we develop our imagination and creativity through the themes of artistic biography*?	16
EXPLORING IDENTITY AND PERSONAL NARRATIVE	16
EXPLORING CULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT	16
CREATING AND SOLVING ARTISTIC PROBLEMS	17
How can we develop cooperation* between young people to develop collective narratives?	19
ENCOURAGING THE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS IN GROUPS	19
SUPPORTING COLLECTIVE NARRATIVES AND COOPERATION* IN JOINT PRODUCTION	20
Drawing on cooperative engineering* in didactics to analyse practices	21
THE METHOD USED	21
HOW CAN THIS METHOD BE USEFUL?	21
HOW DOES IT WORK?	21
Glossary	24
Bibliography	26

General Framework

WHY THIS PEDAGOGICAL GUIDE?

Adolescence is a crucial period for the development of social and emotional habits that are essential for envisioning future directions for a good life. The well-being of young people is an important issue when it is understood that violence, poverty, stigmatisation, discrimination, exclusion and living in situations of humanitarian crisis and fragility favour the development of mental health problems (WHO, 2023).*

Today, it is estimated that 460 million children and young people in the world are affected by conflict, displacement or instability (UNESCO, 2023). More than 250 million children and young people, 6 million more than in 2021, are not in school (ibid.).

Education is an essential entry point for inclusive societies* and for the development of everyone. Yet disadvantaged groups are often left out or excluded from education systems «as a result of more or less subtle decisions that lead to exclusion from curricula, irrelevance of learning objectives, stereotyping in textbooks, discriminatory practices in the allocation and evaluation of resources, tolerance of violence and neglect of needs» (UNESCO, 2020).

Art education through the use of the arts (drawing, painting, theatre, song, dance, etc.) is increasingly used and recognised in humanitarian interventions with populations affected by conflicts, crises or situations of vulnerability*. Programmes incorporating art and artistic practices generally focus on three main sectors: education, child protection and health, particularly psychosocial support.



The aim is to help* young people develop their ability to adapt, learn to solve problems and build fulfilling interpersonal relationships. To achieve this, the professionals involved must be trained to integrate artistic practices into their activities so that they are adapted to their needs. This requires an understanding of how the artistic creation process works and the effects it can have. It also means having the resources to develop practical skills in organising and implementing artistic activities.

These include artists sharing their expertise through art workshops, art therapy workshops in refugee camps, theatre shows and performances designed to raise community awareness of the challenges of social cohesion, and psychosocial support sessions that use art as an alternative form of expression to discuss participants' emotions.

Artistic Biography

AN APPROACH FOR THE WELL-BEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The contexts in which the experiment is being carried out concern:

- *Youth workers* accompanying young Yazidis living in camps in Iraqi Kurdistan*
- *Social work professionals and an artist working with young people from the marginalised district of Sătmărel in Satu Mare, northern Romania.*

These particular cases are emblematic of many other situations where war, or political, economic, ethnic or religious tensions, disrupt social relations and create situations of vulnerability*.

DID IT HELP YOU?

In this guide, we refer to «facilitators» to include all professionals who set up or want to set up educational and artistic activities linked to the development of young people's well-being.

This could involve, for example, setting up creative workshops with groups of young people to create a joint fresco, supporting* projects with artists or even discussion groups between young people that are facilitated by art...

This guide can help you to understand what has worked elsewhere and what has made sense for organisers. More specifically, it can help you to :

- **Initiate artistic projects and activities linked to your artistic biography* and your profession**

- **Question and guide your current practices to transform and evolve them**

- **Guide your attention to the parameters of support* through art to create new activities**

At the end of this guide (pp. 21-22), we propose two options for implementing the cooperative engineering methodology* used, with and without research support*.

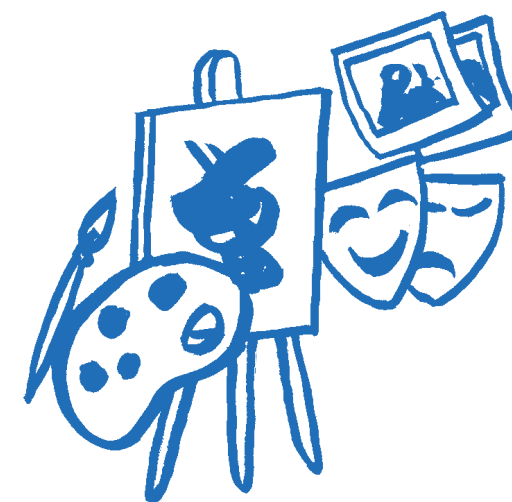
CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC EDUCATION

Cultural and artistic education includes all educational processes aimed at transmitting a cultural heritage to individuals and enabling them to understand and create their own artistic language, through the theory and experimentation of cultural or artistic materials in a creative way at school and outside school.

Cultural and artistic education presents two complementary approaches to teaching and learning «about» or «through» the arts (UNESCO, 2006):

➔ **Arts** education uses the arts as disciplines in their own right. The teaching and learning of the various artistic disciplines (visual arts, singing, dance, circus, etc.) enable the development of artistic talent, sensitivity and appreciation of the arts. For example, there are drawing and music theory classes, and pottery design workshops where you can learn the techniques involved in creating a piece of pottery.

➔ Education **through art** is considered to be a teaching and learning method in which artistic and cultural dimensions are used. For example, facilitators and artists use painting, collage, singing, improvisation or dance to teach maths, science, history or socio-emotional skills. In our case, we use the arts to help* young people connect with their identity, their culture and their environment.



These two forms of education are complementary because they have different contributions and do not have the same objectives.

We believe that art workshops should enable young people to create. Artistic creation is the result of expression and development through the creation of a work of art. It relies on the imagination to transform a reality.

This process involves young people trying to communicate their own vision of a thing, an atmosphere or a situation, using artistic forms to express their perceptions and emotions.

ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHY

It's important to be able to talk about the world around us, particularly in vulnerable situations*. This can enable us to take a step back by identifying situations and thus give us the opportunity to bounce back and think about the future.

The artistic biography* process (or life writing) aims to give young people the opportunity to deal with creative constraints centred on themes that are central to their future direction for the good life*: identity, culture and the environment.

- ➔ **IDENTITY:** this refers to the culture that each human being individually possesses and represents (knowledge of the world, of others, of their standards, ideas, opinions), but also to their intimacy (physical appearance and character, name, sex, nationality, etc.). In other words, identity refers to what makes each of us a person. The narrative produced by the work constructs the young person's narrative identity.
- ➔ **CULTURE:** this refers to the shared culture of a group of people, such as the culture of a country or a group of people, which includes history, gastronomy, values, etc. Culture is taken here in a broad sense to include knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs and other abilities or habits acquired by humans as members of society. In other words, culture refers to «what you need to know» (in the broadest sense) to be a member of a social group.
- ➔ **THE ENVIRONMENT:** the notion of environment is the set of geographical spaces associated with an individual or a group of individuals. The different environments are part of the social markers associated with identity and culture. Environments are interwoven right down to the smallest detail.

We belong to a neighbourhood, a city, a region, a country, a continent and we live on Earth.

Example: If some young people want to set up a project based on their shared passion for a music group, depending on your skills, it may be possible to support them. You could support them in writing song lyrics or a play based on a particular musical movement, or even create a video clip showing their views on the subject.



These themes are modelled on the didactic device* you use to support participants:

1. Through the transmission of artistic knowledge (for the creation of a play: technical and artistic knowledge on the creation of characters, the constraints of the plot, producing the script or directing)

2. By the way you pass on this knowledge (through role-playing, creative group work, specific workshops with scriptwriters or directors, etc.).

These didactic devices should be designed by the team and, as far as possible, with the young people themselves. It is then through artistic creation that the young people appropriate this knowledge (creation of a script illustrating cultural practices from the community, creation of «typical» characters for the collective, collective writing practices on specific subjects, etc.).



WELL-BEING THROUGH ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHY

Biography through arts education aims to develop well-being, in particular resilience and empowerment in young people.

Well-being is generally divided into 3 categories:

→ **Personal well-being:** positive thoughts and emotions such as hope, calm, self-esteem and self-confidence

→ **Interpersonal well-being:** stimulating relationships, a sense of belonging, the ability to be close to others

→ **Skills and knowledge:** the ability to learn, to make positive decisions, to respond effectively to life's challenges and to express oneself.

To better understand what is meant by 'well-being', we need to clarify what resilience and empowerment are:

RESILIENCE

Collective resilience refers to the ability of members of a group to adapt positively and work cohesively to achieve common goals, so as to be able to overcome a situation of collective suffering. This resilience is based on : (1) the feeling of belonging to a 'community of attachment' with which the young person identifies, and (2) the young person's meaningful participation in his or her own development.

EMPOWERMENT

The concept of *empowerment* brings a political dimension that complements resilience: 1) that of power, which is the root of the word, and 2) that of the learning process and the power of the knowledge learned to access it. *Empowerment* implies a process of self-realisation and emancipation of individuals, recognition of groups or communities and social transformation.

To develop resilience and *empowerment* in artistic biography workshops, it is important to consider that the knowledge young people learn through artistic practice echoes the way it is approached in the ordinary cultural practices of their community.

Example: *During a photography workshop aimed at finding out about jobs in a local area, the facilitators (and the artists) devise a system* to pass on practical knowledge (observation of the area, meeting the residents, taking photos, type of framing to be favoured, choice of photos). Each young person takes photos within specific constraints agreed in advance. They will have to respond to this «artistic problem» and find*

creative solutions to it (take portraits of shopkeepers at work, have them pose in front of their storefronts, showcase their tools, etc.). Everyone imagines and creates at their own level, according to their own experience and culture.

The development of resilience and *empowerment* here depends on the way in which knowledge is transmitted and integrated by youth workers and young people during the process of photographic creation. Knowledge of photographic art through experimentation, in direct link with the practical knowledge transmitted, could thus develop resilience and *empowerment*.

How can the activities team

WORK TOGETHER ON A JOINT ARTISTIC PROJECT?



that they can support each other. This may involve discussing the progress made by young people, solving problems and sharing constructive feedback in line with the objectives of improving young people's well-being.

Cooperation* within the animation team contributes to the well-being of young people by fostering an inclusive*, collaborative and safe environment, where everyone feels valued and supported in their learning.

We have sometimes experienced difficulties in allocating roles or tasks, in understanding and recognising each other's contributions, or even in seeing cooperation* in the right light.

PREPARING AND PROVIDING FEEDBACK ON ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

Good preparation and regular meetings to discuss activities are important. All the more so when the team is not used to working together or when the roles are very different. It is important to agree on an overall view of the projects.

These meetings (even short ones) before and after the workshops enable the team to plan the workshops together. The aim is to define the educational and artistic objectives and to draw up facilitation strategies that have been approved by the team. The positions of the facilitators are considered collectively so

> PRACTICAL ADVICE:



• *Develop open and transparent communication aimed at horizontality to allow each team member to express themselves and share their ideas, concerns and suggestions in an open and respectful manner.*

• *Set clear and specific objectives: define common objectives for the artistic project and make sure that each member of the team understands and adheres to them. Make sure that the objectives are realistic, progressive and in line with the needs and interests of the young participants.*

RECOGNISING EVERYONE'S SKILLS AND SHARING ROLES DURING THE WORKSHOPS

One of the conditions for developing good cooperation* is the identification and enhancement of the skills of each member of the team (for example, the youth worker, the psychologist and the artist). Everyone brings their own specific knowledge, interests and skills to enrich the experience of the young people.

Dividing up tasks and rotating roles helps people to work together more effectively. Participants can identify where to find the

specific support and resources they need. Some facilitators can guide the division of tasks between the young people and the participation of all, while others guide the artistic process (preparing the young people to use a camera, presenting theoretical elements on urban art or the steps involved in making an engraving, etc.).



> PRACTICAL ADVICE:

- Flexibility and adaptability: Be prepared to adjust your plans and strategies according to changing needs and circumstances. Be open to new ideas and suggestions from team members and young participants and be prepared to modify your approach to achieve the artistic objectives of the project.
- Make sure that every member of the team feels valued and invested in their role.

Example : During a workshop for a mural fresco created by young people, the youth workers can help prepare the materials, organise the space, ensure the safety of the young people and coordinate the work of the young participants. The artist provides technical and artistic advice to guide the creative process (drawing perspectives, using spray paint, etc.).



DEVELOP GOOD COOPERATION* BETWEEN THE TEAM AND THE YOUNG PEOPLE

Involving young people in defining objectives and in the decision-making process encourages them to take an active part in creating a shared project. Playful planning moments can be organised to encourage their participation. It is essential to create an environment where their voice really counts when decisions are made. These shared decisions can relate to the content or format of the activities, as well as the objectives of the artistic projects.

> PRACTICAL ADVICE:

- Be attentive to the needs and concerns of young people. You can create specific times to listen to them and get their feedback.
- Offer them support and guidance tailored to their skill levels and interests. Make sure you are available to answer their questions, guide them in their creative efforts and solve any problems that may arise during the workshops.



How can artists and entertainers

TRANSMIT A SHARED CULTURE?

A shared culture represents the common values, beliefs, norms and practices accepted by a community or society (traditions, music, crafts, stories and their cultural symbols, history, etc.). This cultural transmission is often weakened in times of crisis or within marginalised communities, yet it is crucial because it fosters a sense of belonging, understanding and appreciation within the community. In times of crisis and vulnerability*, this helps to create a space for reparation by strengthening collective links.

CONNECTING YOUNG PEOPLE TO THEIR CULTURE THROUGH ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHY

By sharing knowledge and experiences through art, young people can feel more grounded and fulfilled by recognising their identity, culture and environment. Achieving a work together can boost their confidence and sense of self-efficacy.

In artistic biography workshops*, the artist's shared culture is expressed through the different forms of artistic expression that he or she transmits, enriched by the experiences of the group. This reflects the experiences, perspectives and values shared in «real» life. The aim is to work together to create a work that reflects this collective identity.

> PRACTICAL ADVICE:



- Encourage an open and respectful dialogue between the presenters, the artist and the young people. Listen actively to their needs and concerns, and be prepared to adapt your approach accordingly.

- Don't hesitate to go where young people want to go, while accompanying them.

It's important that they feel safe and free to work on subjects close to their concerns. This will also be a source of learning for you.

Example: You can encourage young people to explore cultural traditions by presenting traditional dances, songs or dishes typical of their culture. To do this, don't hesitate to ask questions and encourage the other participants to do the same and give their point of view.



DEVELOPING SKILLS AND TALENTS BY PASSING ON PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE

For a culture to be shared, young people need to be involved in the process of artistic creation. The aim is to make them competent in artistic practice, to transform them into «practical connoisseurs*». This may involve developing a detailed understanding of what it means for an artist to practise his or her art. The artist can pass on this shared culture by teaching practical skills, empowering them and guiding them towards autonomy step by step. To foster resilience and empowerment, it is important to provide them with a complete understanding of artistic practice.

For example, an artist may teach specific artistic techniques or share knowledge about the history and cultural tradition associated with their art. In workshops, this might include the importance of presentation or a specific attitude in front of a camera, the care taken when preparing colours for painting, or inspirational folk songs for producing poetry. This sharing is achieved by putting young people into action. They can watch the artist create, but they also need practical

opportunities to experience artistic concepts and skills first-hand. Having young people act out a theatre scene without sharing the skills of an actor, acting techniques, etc. does not allow young people to fully develop their power to act in the art of theatre.



> PRACTICAL ADVICE:

- Think about a step-by-step approach to the project and activities. This will enable them to learn progressively and consolidate their skills. You can then make any necessary adjustments along the way.

- During the workshops, some young people will have preferences and inclinations for certain tasks rather than others. To reassure them, you can divide the young people up according to their preferences. It may be a good idea to guide them towards something new, to get them out of their comfort zone.

EMPOWERMENT AND LINKS WITH THE COMMUNITY

Art projects can act as a catalyst to raise young people's awareness of the social and cultural issues facing their group and the community as a whole. By using art as a means of communication and raising awareness, young people can address important issues and mobilise their community around subjects and causes that are close to their hearts.

As young people acquire skills and confidence in their artistic practice, the artist can guide them towards greater autonomy and independence in their artistic expression.



> PRACTICAL ADVICE:

- You can run workshops in places that young people know, like or even choose: a community centre, a public square, a natural area close to where they live, etc. You can also introduce them to places dedicated to culture: a media library, a museum, an artist's studio, etc.

- The more you pass on practical knowledge of experienced art, the more you enable them to be autonomous in the use of this art of making.

- You can encourage people from the community to come and take part in the artistic process, depending on what young people want. This can strengthen the commitment of the young people and the scope of the project. This could be a craftsman with expertise in making objects or media related to the project.

Example: You could create a podcast project to provide information about career choices after secondary school. This could be in the form of photos, audio, short videos with an explanatory booklet, or something else. These productions encourage reflection and dialogue on subjects such as social cohesion, diversity and the environment. Young people can interview members of their community to get answers. The aim is to create practical opportunities for sharing a common culture while being useful for sharing information.



How can we develop

OUR IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY THROUGH THE THEMES OF ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHY*?

Art is about creating the possible. Exploring identity, culture and the environment through artistic creation allows us to explore subjects that are central and essential to these young people, without being frontal or blocking: projections and wishes for the future, even in the short term, the relationship with the environments of a camp and a town to be rebuilt, the relationship with other young people and the community.

Exploring these fundamental themes through art helps to reassure young people while strengthening their ability to give meaning to who they are and the world around them, and to transform it. It also enables them to anchor themselves in the present and develop their powers of concentration. Some young people may find it difficult to develop their imagination and creativity because they have had little opportunity to do so. This can make it difficult to come up with original ideas. That's why creative themes and constraints help to guide young people. At the same time, tackling sensitive subjects such as identity, culture and the environment can be tricky for presenters. It can stir up intense emotions and revive past traumas. So it's important to co-construct projects with young people to ensure that they feel comfortable with them. If a young person expresses a feeling of unease or has major relationship difficulties, it is possible to talk to them outside the activities, or to refer them to professionals for appropriate psychological counselling.

EXPLORING IDENTITY AND PERSONAL NARRATIVE

By recounting their life experiences through art, young people are encouraged to explore their individual and collective identity, through their personal history, values, beliefs and aspirations. This develops their ability to reflect on who they are and where they belong.

> PRACTICAL ADVICE:

- Work on specific themes, step by step, according to the wishes of the participants. If you want to work on the theme of portraits, you can start by offering an artistic workshop on the face, the body, tastes, personality traits, the family and so on.
- Invite young people to explore different aspects of their identity using different techniques that will encourage creativity: painting techniques, drawing methods, sculpting constraints or even ways of writing or singing.

EXPLORING CULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Using art, young people can explore and represent their culture and environment. This can include creating productions that reflect their cultural heritage, traditions, connection to their local community or relationship with their natural environment. This exploration encourages them to develop their powers of observation and their ability to interpret the world around them creatively. Accompanying young people on an outing, especially if it involves taking transport, can have a lasting impact on the places they feel comfortable going to on their own afterwards.

> PRACTICAL ADVICE:

- Encourage cultural discovery and appreciation: encourage young people to discover, explore and celebrate their own culture and those of other participants. Organise activities that highlight the richness and diversity of cultures, such as cooking workshops, traditional music performances or craft exhibitions.
- Use art as a means of connecting with the environment: encourage young people to think about their relationship with their environment, whether natural, urban or social.

Example: You can organise outings to iconic places to inspire artistic creation, environmental awareness projects or artistic production initiatives in the public space. The aim can be to involve young people in the appropriation or positive transformation of their environment. You can encourage young people to explore these spaces and reflect on the social and cultural significance of urban art. Then organise workshops where young people can create their own urban art inspired by their own experience.

CREATING AND SOLVING ARTISTIC PROBLEMS

The process of creating art can be cathartic and emancipating for young people, allowing them to transform their difficult experiences into works of art that enable their development. This gives them a sense of achievement and control over their own narrative, strengthening their resilience and sense of empowerment in the face of the challenges they face on a daily basis.

Working on collective art projects, young people are presented with creative challenges that challenge them to develop their artistic skills and problem-solving abilities. They have to find innovative ways of representing their experiences and ideas through art, which stimulates their imagination and creativity. The artistic process involves making conscious choices to find creative responses to challenges. It offers young people a space to express themselves and engage actively in an aesthetic and philosophical process.

> PRACTICAL ADVICE:

- Holding several workshops (or sessions) with the aim of producing a joint work may make more sense than holding sessions side by side with no link between them.
- Take the time to brainstorm and discuss together before starting to work on the various activities in the artistic biography. To do this, you can present them with artists' work that might inspire them (documentary on an artist, analysis of a work, virtual visit to a museum, meeting an artist, etc.).
- When guiding young people, instead of giving specific examples, offer inspiring ideas to help them find their own way of looking at the subject.
- Cultivate an environment conducive to experimentation and risk-taking: encourage young people to step out of their comfort zone and explore new ideas, techniques and artistic styles. Create a space where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities and where creativity is encouraged in all its forms.



Example: In the process of creating the artistic biography*, young people are involved at every stage, as in the creation of a collective mural representing their neighbourhood:

1) Identify the artistic problem:

young people recognise the difficulty of representing their neighbourhood in a mural.

2) Stop and think: They take the time to understand the elements involved:

what message do we want to convey through the fresco? What major elements do we want to see?

3) Organising the artistic response:

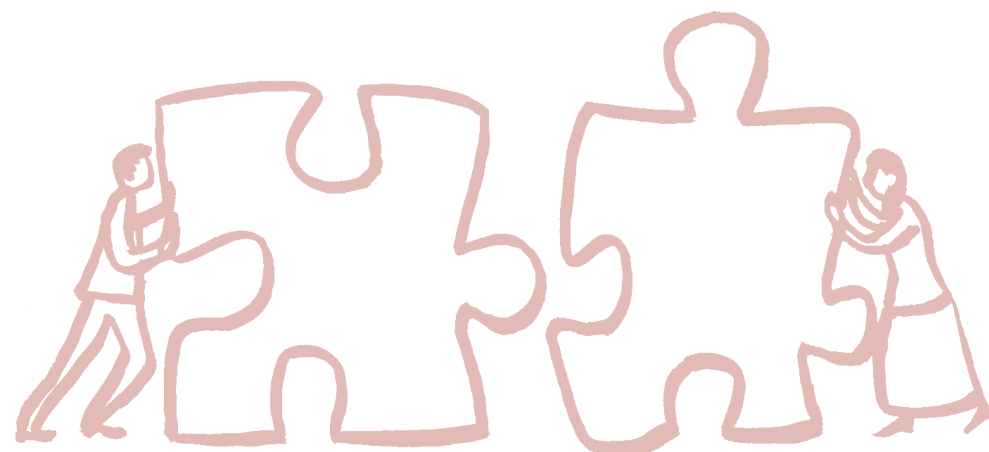
They analyse the necessary steps, such as drawing up a narrative and aesthetic plan on a rough draft. They can refine a

narrative and aesthetic plan to represent a district from an aerial view, the main street or symbolic buildings, then add typical people and speech bubbles.

4) Experiment: they try out different approaches and adapt their creative response. They may choose to paint their favourite place in the district, others choose cultural objects, others a geographical view of the whole district.

5) Reconstructing the solution:

After creating, the young people reflect on the work they have done and present their approach in a feedback session (e.g. a presentation in which they show and explain their approach), thus consolidating the problem-solving process.



How can we develop

COOPERATION* BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE TO DEVELOP COLLECTIVE NARRATIVES?

Cooperative learning is seen as working in small groups, with a common objective, to optimise everyone's learning. It is considered that a collective activity directed in the same direction, towards a goal shared by all, can benefit each member of the group. Cooperative learning encourages creative thinking by increasing the number of ideas, the quality of ideas, feelings of stimulation and pleasure, and originality of expression in creative problem solving. It also triggers ideas by offering different perspectives and alternatives.

We sometimes identified obstacles to cooperation* between young people and produced didactic devices* to reduce them. These difficulties included:

- Most of the young people produced ideas individually and did not always engage in joint reflection prior to production. There was no cooperation*.
- Thinking that they were empowering young people, the activity leaders did not always guide them in their joint reflection prior to the collective artistic production. The lack of a framework hindered their cooperation*.

ENCOURAGING THE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS IN GROUPS

By encouraging cooperation* and interaction with others, cooperative learning* contributes to young people's well-being by strengthening their sense of belonging to a group and fostering positive relationships with their peers.

Youth workers play a key role in developing cooperation* between young people by encouraging the exchange of ideas and facilitating conflict resolution.



> PRACTICAL ADVICE:

- It is important to spell out what is expected of the «group work». This may involve specifying the roles of each person upstream, reporting on a joint reflection, exchanging points of view, devising a next stage, etc. This will clarify expectations and ensure greater consistency in the final product. This will clarify expectations and ensure greater consistency in the final product.
- During the activity, you can take time for each group to present the state of their thinking before they produce. Encourage the young people to express their difficulties and points of difference openly and to cooperate sincerely: this is essential to establish trust and encourage effective cooperation*.

SUPPORTING COLLECTIVE NARRATIVES AND COOPERATION* IN JOINT PRODUCTION

It takes time to overcome young people's lack of experience of working in groups and cooperating on artistic projects. Both you and the young people need to adapt to the group dynamic and learn to work with their peers.

To create a collective narrative, it is essential that the young people share a common vision of the final work. The young people need a framework with clear guidelines for working together to produce the work. They also need to experience interdependence: everyone contributes and has a place that the other recognises and needs.


When the team strives to create an environment where each participant feels valued and involved in the creation of the common work, young people tend to be more committed. This also motivates the professionals who work with them.

> PRACTICAL ADVICE:



- Ensure that the participants are present throughout the project to reinforce the cohesion of the group: this continuity is important to maintain the commitment and motivation of the young people throughout the creative process.

- Take the time to recognise and celebrate the efforts and artistic productions of the young participants and their contributions.



Example: Together, young people can create a short comic strip on the theme of friendship. Divided into small groups, they discuss ideas for the story, the characters and the key events. Everyone contributes by designing the characters, writing the script or drawing the panels. They work together to bring their story to life, listening to suggestions from other members of the group. Once finished, each group presents its comic strip to the others. They share their experiences and successes.



Drawing on cooperative engineering

IN DIDACTICS TO ANALYSE PRACTICES

THE METHOD USED

Our research methodology, known as cooperative engineering, can be defined as a group of thinkers, made up of professionals and researchers who work on the joint development of didactic devices*. These devices are implemented, evaluated and then re-implemented on the basis of this evaluation, as part of an iterative process.

If you do not have the support of a researcher, you can adapt the method. This involves cooperation* between team members to produce didactic* devices for artistic biography collectively.

HOW CAN THIS METHOD BE USEFUL?

Cooperative engineering can help you understand, improve or transform your professional practices or existing systems*. It encourages continuous development by encouraging critical reflection and the exploration of new approaches. By applying it, you can analyse your current methods, design new schemes, and encourage positive transformation in your work with young people. It can enable you to design and experiment with your own artistic biography*.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

An iterative cycle is a process that repeats itself, where each step helps to improve the next. This involves conducting a workshop, evaluating what has been done and then using these observations to adjust and improve the process the next time. In this process, understanding and transformation follow one another continuously: «we understand in order to transform and we transform in order to understand».

1. We think about what we want to do and we build a didactic device*. For example, an activity sheet for a first encounter with a photographer. To do this, you can draw on ideas that respond to needs, important issues and objectives. You can imagine what might happen when you run the workshop with young people. It has to be useful to you.



2. We move on to action: we implement this didactic device during a workshop with the young people and observe how it takes shape. This stage requires the use of video film to be able to observe precisely what happens during the workshop «on the spot».

3. We look at what we have done and start again: We analyse what has happened and compare it with what we had imagined when we designed the scheme. To do this, a group viewing of the film will enable us to identify facts, interactions and practices (whether by the young people or the team), whether they are seen as positive or not. These key moments serve as the basis for the collective analysis and discussion that follow. Once the analysis phase is over, the team can design new support methods and a new system based on what it has learned from the analysis, and so on.

When this process is repeated several times, it can be used to compare the elements observed: Has there been an improvement? Are there any blockages? What have we learned? What have we changed?



> PRACTICAL ADVICE:

- To integrate this approach effectively, make sure that every member of the team is available and finds the application really relevant. Depending on your availability, set aside time slots for feedback, particularly for analysing videos. The results of a system are observed over a continuum of practices and over a sufficiently long period of time.
- To obtain quality video recordings during your workshops, use a digital video camera or smartphone with a tripod. Make sure you position the camera so as to capture the whole activity effectively. In addition, use a microphone or dictaphone to record the sound if you want to make an in-depth analysis of the verbal exchanges during the workshop.
- You can use tools such as an observation grid to identify important elements to think about and integrate into your artistic biography workshops.
- It is essential to obtain the clear agreement of the young participants, even if the videos are intended for internal use only and will not be shared publicly.

Glossary

>> **ANIMATION:** Animation refers to the action of energizing, bringing to life, or giving movement to something. In education, animation refers to the creation and implementation of activities, programs, or events designed to stimulate the involvement, learning, and participation of participants.

>> **ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHY:** Artistic biography» (or «life writing») is a didactic device* with the potential to develop resilience and empowerment. Its aim is to use art to tell the story of individual and collective life experiences through creative processes based on the themes of identity, culture, and the environment.

>> **COOPERATION:** Cooperation is a process of sharing and developing common knowledge. It depends on our ability to act together to solve our problems and fulfill our desires, by building together and sharing knowledge. The ends of the action are shared by all the members of the collective who, together, succeed in producing knowledge for practice that each of them would not have been able to produce alone.

>> **COOPERATIVE ENGINEERING:** Cooperative engineering refers to any group that cooperatively sets itself common goals for the improvement of practice, and that jointly tests the relevance of these goals within concrete systems, in an iterative process (Collectif Didactique pour enseigner, 2024).

>> **DIDACTICS:** Didactics is the study of teaching and learning processes, aiming to understand how knowledge is transmitted and acquired in various fields of learning, including the arts. It explores both the epistemic aspects, relating to the specific knowledge to be taught, and the relational aspects, concerning the way in which this knowledge is communicated and assimilated between facilitators and learners.

>> **DIDACTIC DEVICE:** Didactics is the study of teaching and learning processes, aiming to understand how knowledge is transmitted and acquired in various fields of learning, including the arts. It explores both the epistemic aspects, relating to the specific knowledge to be taught, and the relational aspects, concerning the way in which this knowledge is communicated and assimilated between facilitators and learners (Collectif Didactique pour enseigner, 2024).



>> **GOOD LIFE:** A good life is one that allows each individual to fully explore and express their identity, subjectivity and desires without being restricted by oppressive social norms. It is a life where everyone can find a legitimate place in society, without being judged or discriminated against because of their identity (Butler, 2014).

>> **INCLUSION:** It is a process of responding to and meeting the diverse needs of all learners by removing barriers to participation, learning and success for all. This involves recognising and respecting the diversity of learners and creating a supportive learning environment for all.

>> **PRACTICAL CONNOISSEUR:** A practical connoisseur is someone who has spent a long time working on a cultural practice and who is therefore capable of performing it with art, whether they are a gardener, musician, mathematician, cabinetmaker, dancer, plumber, etc. The practical connoisseur thus becomes more and more knowledgeable about this practice.

>> **PROFESSIONAL POSTURE:** It refers to the attitude, the way of acting and the general approach adopted by a professional in a situation at a given moment with others. It is a state shaped by the beliefs, values and intentions that give meaning to their actions.

>> **PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE:** Professional practice concerns what the professional does: the knowledge, skills, ideas and techniques applied by a professional in his or her concrete actions with a view to achieving a result.

>> **SUPPORT:** Support refers to supporting a person or a group to achieve a goal. It is not about taking their place or taking their initiative. It may involve, for example, clarifying and refining personal, social, or professional objectives.

>> **VULNERABILITY:** Vulnerability is an inherent condition of human life. This means that we are all susceptible to hardship in our environment and dependent on others for protection and support (Butler, 2014).

Bibliography



Arató, F. (2013). Towards a Complex Model of Cooperative Learning. *Da Investigação às Práticas*, 3(1), 57-79.

Bacqué, M.-H., & Biewener, C. (2013). Empowerment, a new vocabulary for talking about participation? *Idées économiques et sociales*, No. 173(3), 25-32.
<https://www.cairn.info/revue-idees-economiques-et-sociales-2013-3-page-25.htm>

Buriel, A., Morais, S., & Loquet, M. (2023). La biographie artistique: Un dispositif didactique pour favoriser la réparation de jeunes Yézidis en Irak à travers l'art. In M. Morel, *Éduquer aux enjeux sociétaux par les arts et la littérature* (Peisaj, p. 65-79).
<https://collections.banq.qc.ca/document/enRExqos9us3Wn9XYxTGUw>

Butler, J., & Rueff, M. (2014). *What is a good life?* Payot & Rivages.

Collectif Didactique pour Enseigner. (2024). *Un art de faire ensemble : Les ingénieries coopératives* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes).

Collectif Didactique pour enseigner (Éd.). (2020). *Enseigner, ça s'apprend.* Retz.

Joffredo-Le Brun, S., Morellato, M., Sensevy, G., & Quilio, S. (2018). Cooperative engineering as a joint action. *European Educational Research Journal*, 17(1), 187-208.

World Health Organization. (2023, April 28). Adolescent and young adult health.
<https://www.who.int/fr/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescents-health-risks-and-solutions>

Sensevy, G., Forest, D., Quilio, S., & Morales, G. (2013). Cooperative engineering as a specific design-based research. *ZDM, The International Journal on Mathematics Education*, 45(7), 1031-1043.

UNESCO. (2006). Road Map for Arts Education. «After the World Conference on Arts Education: Developing Creative Capacities for the 21st Century». Lisbon, 6-9 March 2006.

UNESCO. (2020). Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and education: All means all. Paris. UNESCO.
<https://doi.org/10.54676/JJNK6989>

UNESCO. (2023). September 18). The number of out-of-school children in the world has risen by 6 million.
<https://www.unesco.org/fr/articles/unesco-le-nombre-denfants-non-scolarises-dans-le-monde-augmente-de-6-millions>

UNESCO. (2024). UNESCO Framework for Cultural and Artistic Education.
https://www.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2024/02/WCCAE_UNESCO%20Framework_FR_0.pdf

UNHCR. (2019). Stepping up: Refugee education in crisis. UNHCR.
<https://www.unhcr.org/steppingup/wp-content/uploads/sites/76/2019/09/Education-Report-2019-Final-web-9.pdf>



Improving the well-being

of vulnerable young people through art

SUPPORTING PROFESSIONALS THROUGH ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHY

Artistic practices that encourage «micro-transformations» enable us to take action that is closer to the needs and aspirations of our young people. In the course of our work, we have seen young people transform the way they interact with their peers: in a more cooperative way, reflecting and producing joint works in small groups when they were not doing so at the outset. We saw imaginations unfold to produce a joint fresco when they were sufficiently guided by the artistic biography.

We have seen the extent to which the development of an artistic project is woven and fleshed out with the young people, based on their choices and their learning.

We also know that the well-being of these young people depends on many factors outside the arts workshops. Accompanying young people is a vast and complex path that concerns all of our societies in the long term.



To access the activity sheets produced by the research collectives, scan this QR code or go to this link:
<https://action-education.org/guide-pedagogique-eng/>



Co-funded by
the European Union

