

## THE ART OF ACTION IN EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS.

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### KEYWORDS

*Social Education*  
*Social Justice*  
*Art*  
*Community*  
*Activism*

### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the intersection between art and social pedagogy through activism, exploring its potential for social transformation and critical consciousness, based on Paulo Freire's model. It analyzes the impact of activism on practitioners (artists) and students involved in these practices, to integrate art and social pedagogy and foster social change. Using a qualitative approach, experiences of artists and students in Spain are examined through interviews and content analysis. The results reveal that activism catalyzes personal and collective transformations, promotes critical and empathetic perspectives, and facilitates a deeper understanding of art as a tool for expression and change. Students develop social awareness, and artists highlight the value of art in social diagnosis and community engagement. The study concludes that activism is an effective pathway to transformative education and equitable.*

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Received: 15 / 02 / 2025

Accepted: 28 / 05 / 2025

## 1. Introduction

**E**artivism or , a hybrid between art and activism, has emerged as a powerful tool for social transformation and critical awareness in educational and social contexts.

Historically, art and social pedagogy have been considered distinct fields: art is primarily concerned with individual expression and social pedagogy focuses on transforming the realities of individuals and communities through social intervention. However, recent interdisciplinary initiatives challenge this division and suggest that art can play an important role in achieving the goals of social pedagogy by fostering reflection, critical awareness and social engagement.

This study is situated within the framework of Paulo Freire's conscientization model, which emphasizes the role of education in awakening individuals and communities to the sociopolitical forces that shape their lives. Through this lens, activism is understood as a practice that not only facilitates personal and collective expression, but also serves as a means to diagnose and address social inequalities. By combining artistic creativity with pedagogical objectives, activism offers a method of intervention that goes beyond traditional approaches to both art and education, creating spaces for dialogue and social action.

Despite the growing interest in activism, gaps remain in the academic literature on its effectiveness in educational settings, especially in terms of how it shapes students' understanding of social justice and their role as agents of change. This study seeks to address these gaps by examining the impact of activist practices on both practitioners (artists) and students. Specifically, it explores how activism can catalyze personal and social transformation through its ability to integrate artistic expression with critical pedagogy.

The research is based on a qualitative methodology, using interviews and content analysis to explore the experiences of artists and students in Spain. Through the analysis of these experiences, this study aims to demonstrate how activism fosters critical reflection, empathy and social responsibility, positioning art not only as a form of aesthetic engagement, but as an essential tool for social change.

The overall goal of this research is to contribute to the broader discourse on interdisciplinary approaches to education and social pedagogy by illustrating the potential of activism to cultivate more equitable and socially conscious communities. The following sections explain the theoretical underpinnings of activism (Section II), review the existing literature on the intersection between art and social pedagogy (Section III), present the results of the qualitative analysis of the interviews (Section IV), and conclude with a discussion of the implications of activism for transformative education and social action (Section V).

## 2. Bibliographic review

According to modernity's own division of knowledge, art, social work and pedagogy are human aspects that do not seem to touch each other (Ritzer, 1996); apparently, they are different paths that do not even cross by chance. Thus, while social pedagogy belongs to the social sciences and focuses on transforming the reality of individuals, groups and communities through its own methodology, conscientization (Freire, 2011), art, focused on the expression of the concepts and ideas of the I-artist, is ascribed to the area of the humanities, and brings together a set of skills that, when mastered, allow us to achieve a certain degree of excellence (Eisner, 2004). However, if we focus on expression, could art participate in the object of social pedagogy and allow individuals, groups and communities to transform their reality?

This question arises from the participation of researchers in interdisciplinary projects, in which in order to achieve the objectives it became necessary to use the contributions of other disciplines apparently distant from social pedagogy and social sciences, such as dance, performance, theater, contemplation, literature, cinema, architecture, urbanism and art, which, in turn, by reorienting their object of study towards social change, began to be filled with adjectives that favored the encounter; art became ethical, urbanism sustainable, cinema vindictive; contemplation became conscious; literature creative; social architecture and theater, dance and performance turned towards the oppressed (Freire, 2011).

And so it was that the need to respond to different needs led to the development of an interdisciplinary, creative and unforeseen field, mainly linked to educational, social and health contexts that, from its first steps, offered favorable evidence to maintain such interdisciplinarity (Cliff and Camic, 2016 ; White, 2009). However, these first promising investigations were based on the findings of specific

projects and, consequently, offered isolated conclusions (Badía, 2017). Nevertheless, there was a scientific clamor that gave the findings as good and, therefore, interdisciplinary experiences linked to artistic projects committed to social transformation continued to be implemented with greater frequency and with increasingly specific objectives.

In this context, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) decides to intervene in the subject of art and, after systematizing the results of the main research, determines that the arts play an important role in the transformation of education and, therefore, in the living conditions of peoples, as established by the 2030 agenda, in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) (Venketest et al., 2023), since, when the artistic is involved with the context, it allows individuals, groups and communities to achieve non-artistic objectives such as, among others: community identification, awareness regarding themselves and the environment in which they live and emancipation in relation to the factors that oppress and impede development (Gómez-Ciriano et al., 2016; Rey, 2022).

The reason for this capacity lies in the ontology of art, that is, in its own nature; since the artistic gaze invites to question reality, to look at it from different points of view, and even to reimagine it. Thus, it can be said that art is "that attic" from which, observation becomes inevitable and transgressive (Blanco and Cidrás, 2019).

Therefore, activism is defined as an educational language for social action, which arises from the overflow of artistic, academic and museum creation in social spaces, (Aladro-Vico et al., 2018). And it is that as Debord expressed in the 1960s "the art of the future will be the creation of situations or nothing" (Ardenne, 2002, p.15).

Thus, starting from the definition of activism expressed in the previous paragraph, the present study takes as a reference Paulo Freire's (2011) model of conscientization, which organizes the intervention in several phases: 1- the analysis of reality, becoming aware of the factors that oppress people, groups and communities; 2- the attention to social processes and community objectives through social practice; 3- the investigation of the results and 4- the co-creation, through discursive practice and the production of meanings, of a reality full of sense and meaning (García Cano et al. 2025).

Thus, activism is constituted as a social practice that aims to generate human, social and community context (Pérez, 2021), through the implementation of artistic practices focused on transforming the perception of reality, that is, open to the languages of expression (Gil-Ruiz and Domínguez-Lloria, 2025), and is based on the following socio-educational principles present in the conscientization model:

1. The arts and art institutions should be open to participation and listening, so that a dialogue is established between the context and the artist person (González García, 2019).
2. Thus, from the educational point of view, there is a parallelism between activist practices and the paradigms of meaningful and transformative learning, which is concretized in the existence of a previous knowledge of the context by a collective or group that is put in connection with a new experience (in this case artistic) and from there a restructuring of that knowledge is produced.

In this sense, it is possible to affirm that the relationship that exists between social pedagogy as a discipline that engages people with the environment and engaged art is symbiotic (Moreno, 2016).

From the educational point of view and from the paradigms of meaningful learning, activist pedagogy emerges linked to social challenges involving students in situations of an ethical, political, creative and empathetic nature towards the context that affects people's lives (Mesías-Lema, 2018). The results derived from the concrete experience of students and researchers in the environment of activism (Aladro-Vico et al., 2018) suggest that they manage to infect young people with the rupturist and liberating spirit that always accompanies dynamic social action initiatives.

### 3. Material and Method

#### *3.1 Context of the research and object of study.*

First Objective: Activism and Conscientization Model. The research starts from the hypothesis that activism emerges from Paulo Freire's conscientization model, occupying an interdisciplinary space between art and social pedagogy. This framework explores how activism catalyzes personal and social transformations by integrating artistic elements into social processes and interventions. Collaborators from Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Universidad de Valladolid, Laboratorio Pantono and Centro

de Cultura Contemporánea Conde Duque are conducting an in-depth study of activist practices in Spain, analyzing the perceptions and experiences of active participants in this field.

**Objective Two: Activism and student perceptions.** The second hypothesis suggests that students exposed to artistic mediations that address social issues such as injustice and inequality develop an activist perspective. This approach considers art as a tool to foster social awareness, critical reflection and empathy. Researchers at CES Don Bosco University, attached to the Complutense University of Madrid, aim to examine whether students' perceptions of art align with the activist practices identified in the first objective. This phase aims to connect activist theory with students' reactions and reflections on these artistic expressions.

### 3.2 Operationalization of the object of study.

In order to operationalize the objectives of the study, four dimensions or "units of analysis" (Ruíz-Olabuénaga, 2012) are established; and for each dimension, specific objectives and variables or "units of measurement" (Ibáñez, 2002) are specified, which make it possible to determine their achievement (Kvale, 2011). The dimensions, objectives and research variables established for this research are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Dimensions, objectives and variables of analysis of activist practices.

Dimensions	Objectives	Variables of analysis
<b>1. Academic profile of the activists.</b>	1. Identify the variables that describe the profile of activist individuals.	1. Gender 2. Level of qualification attained 3. Academic and/or cultural activity 4. Experience in the field
	2. To know the training of the activists who have completed undergraduate studies in education and/or social work.	1. Area.
<b>Interdisciplinarity.</b>	1. Analyze the context of activist practices.	1. Working alone 2. Working with professionals from other disciplines.
	2. Analyze the relationship between the arts and social work.	1. The curricular importance of art 2. The curricular importance of social work.
<b>3. Contributions of education and social work to activist practices.</b>	1. To know the contributions that the conscientization model (Freire, 2011) makes to activism.	1. Meaning and content 2. Perception of reality 3. Method.
<b>4. The systematization of activist practices.</b>	Organize the activist processes in phases and stages, taking Freire's (2011) model of conscientization as a starting point.	1. The study of reality 2. The design of the intervention around community objectives. 3. The application of activist practice 4. The evaluation of processes and results, in terms of social transformation processes.
<b>5. Connections of activist practices with the student body.</b>	1. Identify the distinctive characteristics of activist practices.	1. The categorization represented by activist practices. 2. Relation of the categories to the comments collected by the student

Source: own elaboration, 2025.

### 3.3 Participants

A total of 42 activists participated in the research, selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria (Ruíz-Olabuénaga, 2012):

- **Experience:** More than six years of experience in activist projects, using the six-year research period established in Spain as a unit of measurement to evaluate the results of the projects.

- Publications: Participation in activist projects with results published in Scopus or Web of Science.
- Education: University studies in social pedagogy.

The study includes 176 undergraduate and double degree students of the CES Don Bosco University, which represent the entire population under study, since participation in the organized activities is mandatory (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Profiles of the students in the study.

Table 2. Profiles of the students in the study.						
Grades			Course	Subject	Women	Men
Degree in Primary Education and Pedagogy	2º		Didactic and methodological bases of plastic and visual education.	1	0	
Double Degree in Early Childhood and Elementary Education	2º		Didactic and methodological bases of plastic and visual education.	4	0	
Degree in Pedagogy	2º		Didactics of visual arts	2	1	
Degree in Primary Education	3º		Fundamentals of arts education	32	5	
Degree in Early Childhood Education	3º		Fundamentals of arts education	49	4	
Degree in Early Childhood Education	2º		Creativity and education	70	8	

Source: own elaboration, 2025.

### 3.4 Research design and work plan

The study adopts a qualitative approach, considered the most appropriate for exploring interdisciplinary and emerging fields such as art (Denzin and Lincoln, 2012). This method delves into activist practices, considering the intersubjectivities among participants and their sociocultural contexts (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1994).

The methodology combines interviews and questionnaires (Alonso, 2013; Reidl, 2012) and defines the study through dimensions, objectives and variables (Ruíz Olabuénaga, 2012). Following the guidelines of Alvira (2002), customized data collection instruments were developed to effectively apply these techniques.

To ensure ethical rigor, the institutions followed a protocol based on the Declaration of Helsinki (2008), divided into two phases:

Inform participants about the nature, purpose and methodology of the study, while requesting their collaboration.

Obtaining informed consent, detailing data confidentiality, restricted use to academic contexts, and data custody responsibilities.

The work plan comprises five stages, focusing on the intersection of the arts and social sciences, which are described in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Work plan

Phases	Objectives	Shares
<b>Bibliographic review</b>	Analyze the conscientization model (Freire, 2011). Establish the framework of activism in relation to the social and cultural context.	Bibliographic and documentary analysis.
<b>Definition of the research project</b>	Identify the dimensions, objectives and variables involved in activist practices.	Determination of the object of study in dimensions, objectives and variables.

<b>The proposal</b>	<b>methodological</b>	Determine the sampling. Select research techniques. Creation of data collection instruments.	The specification of the criteria for purposive sampling (Ruíz Olabuénaga, 2012). The choice of the interview as a research technique to delve into the practice of the artists and the questionnaire to describe both their profile and their academic trajectory (Alonso, 1999). Creation of research instruments for data collection.
<b>The implementation of research actions.</b>		Interview the selected persons. Selection and organization of activities during the academic year 2023-2024  Comply with the Helsinki protocol.	Selection of participants. Visits to exhibitions Subsequent data collection The organization of the interviews.  The establishment of a protocol of good practices (Declaration of Helsinki, 2008).
<b>Data analysis</b>		Analyze the results using the content analysis technique.	Categorization and coding of the data, according to the dimensions and variables that describe the object of study. Application of the content analysis technique. Elaboration of the report of results and conclusions, including photographic reports of the practices artist.

Source: own elaboration, 2025.

This project uses interviews and open-ended questionnaires to gather practical information about activism and define variables (dimensions 1-4 in Table 1). Interviews involve a "face-to-face dialogue in which interviewees represent individual perspectives" (Llopis, 2004, p.35). Open-ended questionnaires are effective in exploratory studies, especially in emerging fields such as activism (Cea D'Ancona, 2012).

Artist participants are selected through research groups in national museums and Spanish faculties of education that analyze activism as social pedagogy. Questionnaires are distributed online and interviews are conducted conversationally.

For dimension 5 (Table 1), a qualitative analysis was conducted using Atlas.ti 23. Open coding identified core ideas, while axial coding connected patterns, creating new categories based on Scales (2013) and Niedbalski & Ślęzak (2017). These methods revealed recurring patterns that define activist practices.

The categories and key codes were classified according to their substantiation (frequency) and density (distribution of documents), selecting those with a minimum frequency of two (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Codebook resulting from the coding process.

Target	Level I code (variable)	Level II code (frequencies)	Basic code (rooting)
<b>To examine whether university students' perceptions of art coincide with the</b>	Social transformation	I:1, I:20, I:40	Art as the main vehicle for social transformation (3)
	Participatory and transdisciplinary methodologies	I:1, I:20, I:40	Use of methodologies that include diverse perspectives and participation (5)
	Committed artistic practices	I:1, I:20, I:40	The practices are deeply linked to social commitments (3).



<b>artist practices of the selected universe.</b>	Community empowerment	I:3, I:22, I:41	Art improves communication and understanding of the community (3)
	Education and training	I:1, I:22, I:41	A background in areas such as theater and art education influences their artistic practice (3).
	Identity and diversity issues	I:1, I:22, I:41	Addressing issues of identity and diversity, using art to explore these areas (3)
	Political and social impact	I:2, I:21, I:40	They use art to denounce and reflect on political and social contexts.
	Intersection between art and social intervention	I:3, I:22, I:41, I:2	Relevance of art in social intervention (3) mutual influence between art and social intervention (2)
	Reflective and critical processes	I:1, I:20, I:40	Artistic processes encourage reflection (3) and activate critical thinking (2)
	Integration of experience and knowledge	I:3, I:22, I:41	Importance of the integration of art and social action in the educational curriculum and practice (3)
	Visibility and social representation	I:36, I:37	Art to represent and give visibility to marginalized issues and groups (2)
	Construction of alternative narratives	I:27, I:37	Art to question and transgress dominant and established narratives (2)
	Empathy and human connection	I:28, I:38	Art helps to develop empathy and connect emotionally with others (2)
	Access to spaces for expression	I:27, I:37	Creation of spaces where people can express themselves and be heard through art ( 2 )

Source: own elaboration, 2025.

As for the student, he/she is required to visit three museums during the four-month period, including at least one participatory activity (workshop or dialogue visit) to improve his/her understanding of the exhibitions and observe the methodologies. The department facilitates access by scheduling a visit to Indestructibles, an exhibition within the university that features large-format photographs critiquing African realities (Rodriguez and Aldekoa, 2024). Students analyze and integrate their experiences as creative transgressions, deepening their understanding of diverse cultural perspectives. Table 5 describes the phases of the activity, the objectives and the techniques applied.

**Table 5.** Outline of data collection and corresponding analysis.

Phase	Activity	Target	Method	Context
<b>Phase 1: Museum experiences</b>	Visit to 3 exhibitions	Encourage experiential learning and artistic appreciation.	Selection and programming of visits to museums.	Experiential learning
	Visit to the Indestructibles exhibition, mediated by the artists themselves	To learn about the discourse of the work from the perspective of the artists themselves.	Participation in the mediated visit to CES Don Bosco University.	Active learning

Phase Reflection and analysis	2:	Post-visit reflection	Analyze and reflect on learning experiences.	Post-visit reflection task.	Learning by doing
		Qualitative questionnaire	analysis Evaluate the impact of visits and activities on perception and knowledge.	Distribution of the ad hoc questionnaire.	Learning engaged

Source: own elaboration, 2025.

To carry out the qualitative analysis and respond to dimension 5 specified in Table 1 and variable 2 (relationship of the categories with the comments collected by the student), we developed a specific questionnaire combining several types of questions: multiple choice with single answer, yes/no questions and several open-ended questions to go deeper into the topics. This questionnaire was carefully validated by a team of professors specialized in the disciplines involved, adjusting it to the purposes of our study and ensuring its clarity for the respondents. Composed of 17 items, the questionnaire included a key research question formulated to explore university students' perceptions of art as a fundamental right. Data were collected through Google Forms, chosen for its efficiency in data collection. Once the collection was completed, the responses were exported to Excel, which simplified the initial organization and preliminary statistical analysis, focused on the calculation of percentages.

## 4. Results

Of the 42 self-identified artists, 74% are women and 26% men. All participants have higher education: 40% are specialized in pedagogy, social education, psychology or social work, and 71% have a doctorate. The average experience of the people interviewed in the field of activism is 14.6 years (between 6 and 32 years) and they have an active academic and artistic career recognized by validation bodies and mechanisms.

All 42 participants emphasize the importance of interdisciplinary teamwork in achieving both social change and artistic goals. In their responses, activism is often related to the feminist movement. Participants from education and social work emphasize knowledge of the arts, combining cultural approaches and art history with practical skills. Examples include the use of photography to convey meaning (I: 17) and the use of theater and performance to develop gestural language and body symbolism (I: 2).

In addition, there have also been approaches to the vindictive art linked to the women's liberation movement since "the knowledge of activism has come from the hand of feminism" (I: 32) and therefore, "I consider that it is necessary not to lose sight of the defense of women's rights" (I: 8).

From the search for teleological coherence, "despite having studies in the area of social pedagogy or precisely because of it, when implementing activist projects I have felt the need to question my own practice" (I: 42), thus "the pedagogy of the oppressed allowed me to develop more conscious and sensitive actions" (I: 18) and in this sense, activists, pressured by the need to seek a better methodological framework for their projects, have been approaching other pedagogies such as active and participatory ones, since, "at a given moment, it was necessary to generate living contexts both in the classroom and outside it" (I: 10) and "to take into account the so-called invisible pedagogies to generate meaningful and rich learning contexts" (I: 42).

Thus, having knowledge in social psychology "became necessary to approach and listen to groups and communities, favoring people's participation and involvement" (I: 20), therefore, "social skills were very useful for me to manage communication and promote community processes" (I: 19) and "aspects related to leadership helped me to positively manage conflicts and difficulties that arise in groups" (I: 15).

Finally, the need to know the impact of the projects and to develop a methodological proposal based on social pedagogy led the participants to approach sociology, since "the paradigms and techniques of social research are indispensable for interpreting and understanding the data, situating them within a theory and giving coherence to everything that is done" (I: 20).

The interdisciplinary nature of activist processes. People who come from the social field and develop activist projects consider that "there is a symbiotic relationship between social work and artistic practices" (I: 6), which is specified in the method of intervention, "the artistic being a technical resource



that facilitates the achievement of social projects" (I: 2), especially those "linked to the improvement of health, from a biopsychosocial perspective and to the welfare of individuals, groups and communities" (I: 8).

Thus, "art, when committed, is capable of making a difference, making collective problems visible" (I: 20), as well as, "denouncing injustice" (I: 2) and "allowing the expression of discomfort and meaningful learning from one's own experiences" (I: 19), facilitating in this sense, "social inclusion and the improvement of living conditions" (I: 10).

Curricular variables involved in activist practices: the balance between art and social work. Regarding the weight that knowledge of artistic methodologies and the application of the method of social intervention should have in the practice of activism, people who come from pedagogy, psychology and social work consider that "both the artistic component and the psychosocial and political component should have the same weight" (I: 2), that is to say, "one must be trained in both worlds" (I: 20). Therefore, "it is impossible to determine a percentage, the relationship between art and the social is bidirectional, they feed back" (I: 8), there is "a synergy that must be sought to place art in social practice" (I: 10).

Thus, "since activism is a form of activism that combines art and social action, it is necessary to have training and experience in both fields" (I: 16). In this sense, "as a language, art has its own code and, if learned, it allows to reach a great expressive and communicative power, but without losing sight of the social as a context" (I: 9).

Art is "a powerful tool for expressing and promoting social justice, equality and freedom. It is a form of resistance, a way of celebrating diversity, which allows building stronger communities, but, to do so, it needs to be supported by the methodology of social intervention, as it helps artists to focus their works towards denouncing and solving social problems" (I: 3).

Variables involved in the conception of the link between art and social pedagogy. In fact, "art should be part of the studies of pedagogy or social work in a transversal way, it is one more technique and as such should be incorporated into the different subjects" (I: 11).

Contributions of social pedagogy to activist projects: meaning and content.

As for the contributions of social pedagogy to artistic practices, most participants focus on "meaning", that is, "giving art an objective, a purpose" (I: 19); "a critical perspective" (I: 4), which takes the form of "a pragmatic and transformative value" (I: 1). Consequently, the social "takes art out of the frame, to place it at the very center of life" (I: 20), "by generating awareness of social problems and promoting dialogue and reflection and contributing to social transformation" (I: 3).

Therefore, "the methodology of social pedagogy distances the artist from his own vision of things, it is not a renunciation of the self, but a projection of the self in the other, in his need, and that is where art, which does not cure, heal or save, is filled with meaning" (I: 20).

This "sense" that social pedagogy brings to art, for some of the participants in the study, "is of political content" (I: 2), "it allows questioning the dynamics of power established from the symbolic" (I: 8), thus, "social pedagogy reminds art that it has a component and a political responsibility, it is not only a show or a material creation, but part of the responsibility of artists is to bring injustice closer to the public" (I: 2).

Contributions of social pedagogy to activist projects: perception of reality. Thus, social pedagogy "gives depth to the use of the senses" (I: 17), "increases the artists' capacity to listen" (I: 20), "by connecting them with their community, appearing the desire to intervene in it" (I: 5). A characteristic that, in turn, "allows them to create more relevant works, situated in reality" (I: 3), "contributing, in this way, to increase participation, both in number of people and in their commitment to activist practices" (I: 15).

Contributions of social pedagogy to activist projects: the methodological framework.

From the methodological point of view, the participants in the study consider that the awareness model brings to art "a technical character that is seen, in addition to the need to listen to the community, in the obligation to systematically document reality, using coherent thinking that intuitively and reaffirms artistic processes, endowing them with social utility" (I: 14).

It also allows "artists to learn to accompany groups and communities, facilitating the achievement of social objectives linked to the increase of well-being for all" (I: 15).

The systematization of activist practices from the perspective of social pedagogy.

When it comes to systematizing activist practices, people from the social field consider that they "follow the model of awareness-raising" (I: 19), since they "function as a technical resource that facilitates the achievement of objectives of change and well-being" (I: 2). Evidently, "like any technique, they have an application and that application constitutes a process in itself, the artistic one, but it does not cease to be a resource aimed at denouncing oppression or injustice and/or improving the living conditions of a group or community" (I: 20).

Thus, the first step of an activist project is "the perception of reality in order to elaborate a diagnosis adjusted to the social circumstances and, in this sense, art, due to its creative capacity, allows to express in a holistic way everything that is difficult to say, but not to express through artistic language" (I: 15).

The perception of reality "leads groups and communities to become aware of their own problems" (I: 8), making it possible for people to "change their perspective on what conditions them and seek alternative solutions to improve their situation" (I: 20), perhaps that is why "its transgressive and alternative capacity is one of the main contributions of art to social intervention" (I: 19).

However, art understood as a technical resource, "does not cure, does not save, does not intervene" (I: 20), but, "by committing itself to the objectives of individuals, groups and communities, it is endowed with meaning and becomes a powerful mediating tool between the objectives of social work and the intervention groups" (I: 20) since, "it facilitates expression, favors awareness and autonomy, understood as decision-making capacity" (I: 8) and, furthermore, when practiced in a group "it facilitates prosocial behavior" (I: 2), "contributing to concretize the objectives linked to emotional and social intelligence and, favoring the development of individuals, groups and communities" (I: 19).

Thus, from a methodological point of view, the artistic resource facilitates "the realization of activities focused on self-knowledge, social awareness, community organization, expression of needs and discomforts, otherness and empathy, and development of social interaction skills" (I: 20), since, "it is a set of practices that lead to the explicit expression of a self -of a we-others-feeling" (I: 8), furthermore "its marked processual character carries implicit flexibility and resilient attitude" (I: 2).

In summary, the characteristics of arts-based research "facilitate the analysis of activities, both from the point of view of their adaptation and development and of the evaluation of results" (I: 15); moreover, as one of the interviewees indicates, "in group and community processes, art favors awareness and, consequently, contributes to the diagnosis of needs and to the adjustment of the design of actions" (I: 20). It is, therefore, a "synergistic resource, which fits well in all phases of the circular intervention methodology" (I: 2).

Connections of activists' practices with the student body. The analysis of the interviews conducted with the activists identified fourteen relevant categories (Table 6) that reflect the spectrum of their practices. Of the 176 responses obtained from our student body, 77 of them, equivalent to 43.75%, aligned with one or more of these categories, demonstrating a significant connection to the principles of activism.

Once an analysis by categories is made, the highest percentage is reached by the Education and Training category (N=14) with a percentage of 18.18% while Community Empowerment (N=2) and Visibility and Social Representation (N=3) represent 2.59% and 3.89% respectively. However, the student body does not take into account in their opinions the Intersection of Art and Social Intervention, the Integration of Experiences and Knowledge and the Construction of Alternative Narratives. Table 6 presents the rest of the results.

**Table 6.** Classification of the comments collected by the students in the activist categories

Categories	Number of responses	%
<b>Social transformation</b>	6	7,79 %
<b>Participatory and transdisciplinary methodologies</b>	11	14,25
<b>Committed artistic practices</b>	4	5,19%
<b>Community empowerment</b>	2	2,59%
<b>Education and training</b>	14	18,18%
<b>Identity and diversity issues</b>	8	10,38%

<b>Political and social impact</b>	8	10,38%
<b>Intersection between art and social intervention</b>	NA	0%
<b>Reflective and critical processes</b>	5	6,49%
<b>Integration of experience and knowledge</b>	NA	0%
<b>Visibility and social representation</b>	3	3,89%
<b>Construction of alternative narratives</b>	NA	0%
<b>Empathy and human connection</b>	4	5,19%
<b>Access to spaces for expression</b>	12	15, 58 %

Source: own elaboration, 2025.

In the category of Education and Competency Development, it should be noted that art is presented in the early stages of life, continually fostering expressive skills: "Children begin by expressing themselves through drawing." (A:1). It is essential to creating an informed and creative society: "It is necessary for society to be educated in art." (A:22), and provides unique tools applicable in different contexts: "It gives you tools that other subjects can't" (A:25).

Art promotes integral development, cultural connection and personal growth: "It fosters personal expression, creativity, aesthetic appreciation and integral human development, contributing to an inclusive and culturally enriched society" (A:89). It also emphasizes freedom of expression and highlights the multiple benefits for human development, such as "personal development, expression, learning, and creativity" (A:122).

In the category Access to spaces for expression, the importance of universal access to artistic expression stands out: "We all deserve to make art and express ourselves as much as to see the art of others" (A:10). Art serves as a vital tool for personal expression, fostering mutual understanding and respect by expanding spaces for dialogue: "It is a medium that allows us to express ourselves and learn about the opinions of others while respecting each other" (A:11). Universal accessibility is essential for free expression: "It is a form of human expression to which everyone has access" (A:23). Art should be a space of unrestricted expression for all: "It is a form of expression and should be free for all" (A:52). In addition, art offers diverse forms of personal communication: "To be able to express ourselves in a different way" (A:85), emphasizing freedom as a crucial element for individual expression: "It is a way of expressing yourself, where you are free and everyone can express themselves as they want" (A:145).

In participatory and transdisciplinary methodologies, art broadens perspectives and encourages participation in the exploration of new knowledge and experiences: "The power of knowing beyond what we are used to seeing" (A:2). Creativity appears as a collaborative, transdisciplinary process that reimagines and transforms the environment: "With it, new things are created or existing things are changed to look differently" (A:24). Interdisciplinary participation in art fosters communication and connections between different contexts: "It helps us learn about cultural diversity, communicate nonverbally, and connect with people who share our artistic tastes" (A:39). Art bridges diverse cultures and disciplines, deepening participatory understanding and contributing to human development by fostering creativity (A:55). The diversity of techniques and approaches in art highlights multiple forms of expression and perspectives: "It allows for the expression of emotions, thoughts, artistic life, tastes and ideologies, using a variety of techniques" (A:64).

Social transformation. Art is a key driver of cultural diversity, critical thinking and societal participation: "It fosters personal and emotional development, cultural diversity, innovation and critical thinking, connecting us to culture and society" (A:5). It acts as a catalyst for inclusive and conscious societies: "Access to art enriches personal and cultural development, helping to create more conscious, diverse and inclusive communities" (A:30). Art facilitates understanding and reflection on different cultures and historical contexts, helping to "contextualize and understand cultures and customs through the ages, allowing us to know our past and reflect on our present" (A:38). In addition, art fosters social

cohesion and well-being, enhancing community development: "It fosters expression, personal development, social cohesion and the well-being of individuals" (A:99).

The Identity and Diversity themes highlight how art allows people to explore and express their cultural and personal identities, providing a window into human diversity and evolution, "Art is a form of personal and cultural expression and from it we have been able to tell the world the story and our own evolution" (A:5). He emphasizes the role of art as a contribution to greater social cohesion: "Art is essential for personal expression and the preservation of culture. In addition, art fosters empathy and promotes mutual respect and social cohesion" (A:7).

Political and social impact of art. It reinforces cultural identity and freedom of expression, contributing significantly to social and political impact: "Through art, cultural pride and identity are maintained, along with freedom of expression" (A:14). It serves as a tool for reflection and defense of equality and social values: "Art allows citizens to reflect, create and fight for an egalitarian world or for certain values" (A:149). Beyond aesthetics, art is a channel for political and social vindication, effectively disseminating critical messages: "Art is a form of liberation, expression and manifestation, conveying messages beyond beauty" (A:173).

Engaged Artistic Practices foster empowerment and social change by addressing social problems and making them visible: "Art is empowering, it breaks conventions and promotes personal and cognitive growth" (A:57). It serves as a catalyst for change, making social problems more understandable and impactful: "Art helps us see social problems in a more striking way" (A:100).

Reflective and critical processes. Art promotes deep reflection and critical thinking: "Art allows reflection, creation and inspires the construction of a better world" (A:58). It transcends aesthetics to foster dialogues and diverse perspectives, encouraging debate and personal growth: "Art connects with universal experiences, producing diverse emotions and perspectives" (A:60). Art broadens mental horizons and critical thinking: "It allows you to think and open your mind" (A:76).

Community empowerment. Art promotes personal and emotional development, cultural diversity and social cohesion: "Art enriches lives, fosters personal development, and supports cultural diversity and freedom of expression" (A:27). It increases empathy and understanding, fostering inclusion and equity: "Art supports freedom of thought, identity, culture and inclusion" (A:126).

Empathy and human connection. Art fosters emotional connections, enhancing understanding of others' experiences: "Art is a form of communication that contributes to cultural, emotional, and social development" (A:29). It develops empathy and fosters shared human experiences: "Art allows us to express emotions, fostering understanding and encouragement" (A:35). As a means of self-expression, it strengthens personal and social bonds: "Art allows for the unique expression of human experiences, contributing to personal identity" (A:44).

Visibility and social representation. Art amplifies voices and cultural expression, fostering inclusion and representation: "Art acts as a means of expression and freedom for all" (A:3). It celebrates cultural diversity and fosters social understanding: "Art reflects history and artistic richness, crucial to the development of society" (A:50). By broadening cultural appreciation, art builds a more inclusive society: "It brings well-being, knowledge and cultural enrichment" (A:59).

## 5. Debate

The percentage data indicate that there are 73.7% of women activists compared to 26.3% of men, with a male frequency in undergraduate studies in social work standing at 15.72% (Díaz and González, 2019) and is close, although far from reaching it, to the number of men enrolled in Fine Arts, 38.70% (Quilez, 2018). The reason for this disparity may be due to the fact that, despite the fact that social work has been and is a feminist and feminized profession, related to care and welfare (Segade and García-Castillo, 2022), the artistic field attracts a greater number of men. In this sense, despite the fact that engaged art is a fertile ground for women artists, it is also a place open to more porous masculinities (Moreno, 2016).

In addition, analyzing the data, it is observed that the presence of feminism is important for 90% of the people interviewed, men and women, relevance that could be related to the feedback that has historically existed between art and feminism (Builes, 2018).

The high percentage of PhDs (71%) among the participants is attributed to their roles as university teachers and researchers, which require justifying the results of activist projects through academic research techniques and data analysis. This is consistent with findings indicating that many pursued continued research-focused training after completing their degrees (Martínez-Verez et al., 2020). Their



active academic careers in research and culture further explain their need to further their training in these areas (Moreno, 2016). These individuals demonstrate a cultivated sensitivity, which makes them more receptive in practice.

D. studies, together with the years of experience (14.6 on average, similar to the required contribution period), and the existence of a criterion established in the international sample that requires having participated in projects of national or international relevance, indicate that most of the people interviewed have an active research career and a professional trajectory in the field of artistic mediation (Martínez-Vérez, et al., 2020).

Likewise, this descriptive analysis is important to situate the imprint of the present study, since the research context to be analyzed is that of the people who are systematizing and substantiating the practice of activism in Spain.

As for the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge and subjects, which according to activists is necessary to achieve the objectives of committed art, it is curious to say the least that this need fits with the description of the environment in which professionals in the social field operate (Segade and García-Castillo, 2022), since both fields require diverse professional profiles (López, 2012).

This interdisciplinarity is also observed in the need to complement the training received in the social field with knowledge of art and artistic techniques, as well as with other knowledge and disciplines linked to active methodologies (López, 2010). This approach to other areas is possibly due to the fact that, once the impact of art is known, the desire to learn more about the use of this resource appears (Moreno, 2016).

The symbiosis between the arts and sensitizing social pedagogy is evident for activists, an issue also pointed out by the WHO (Venketest, Ruprecht, and Ferede, 2023), which considers it important to generate projects in the field of promoting the well-being of individuals, groups and communities that link professionals and social, cultural and health entities, in a network beyond the artistic (Martínez-Vérez, et al., 2020).

But, in addition, the activists concretize and describe the symbiosis through a set of contributions. Thus, for example, the objective and commitment is a contribution of social pedagogy to art, by giving it meaning (Moreno, 2022), since, by moving away from the domain and technical skill and approaching expression, it contributes to become aware of the injustices that constrain people, groups and communities, makes them visible and contributes to generate welfare alternatives, increasing citizen autonomy (Pérez, 2021).

In addition, the people interviewed consider that artistic practices favor listening and perception, constituting a powerful mediating tool that stimulates the senses and sensitivity (Raquero and Perales, 2022), establishing an active awareness, which becomes a consequence and commitment (Moreno, 2022).

Another quality of artistic processes that facilitates the application of the conscientization model is that art "per se" implies a fracture of everyday life, a disruption of reality, a questioning of the established order (Blanco and Cidrás, 2019), so it favors alternative thinking and the search for other possible solutions to human and social problems (Moreno, 2022).

On the other hand, as activists refer, the conscientization model endows ethical art with a framework to adequately deploy its radius of action (Moreno, 2016), making it possible for the artistic to be embodied in an object or work, according to some professional principles (Calamaro, 2018).

In this sense, just as art is a powerful loudspeaker that, when engaged, enhances the vindictive nature of social pedagogy, the latter, for activists, offers art the idea of justice and injustice (Freire, 2011), hence the symbiosis.

Finally, according to the activists, art, due to its marked reflexive and processual character, is applicable in all phases of the awareness model, contributing to the community diagnosis phase in terms of making injustices visible, to the analysis of implementation and results, evaluating the progress of the mobilized groups, as well as to the achievement of the different objectives by increasing the social commitment and autonomy of individuals, groups and communities (Venketest et al., 2023 ).

Thus, attending to these issues, sensitivity and visibility, meaning and objective, action and commitment, it is possible to establish a relationship between the arts and social pedagogy understood from the model of awareness that contributes to improving the lives of individuals, groups and communities, with respect to what we call the common good and which is everyone's heritage (Pérez, 2021).

In the connections of activist practices with the student body, we address how students recognize art as a vital form of personal expression that promotes mutual understanding and respect, reflecting the activist vision of using art as a tool for social dialogue and makes collective problems visible. Art's ability to act as a catalyst for change is based on its dual role as a means of personal expression and a tool for social awareness (Freire, 2011).

The student considers art as an essential means for social transformation, which reflects the intention of the activists to use art as a tool for social change. Art, when involved in educational, social and health contexts, not only elevates personal expression, but also promotes critical interaction with the social environment, facilitating processes of change (Freire, 2011 ; Ritzer, 1996;). Art can contribute to social transformation through its integration with social pedagogy. This synergy between art and social pedagogy makes it possible to address and modify the realities of individuals and communities, which is evident in the emergence and development of activism as an educational and social practice.

Students recognize the importance of participatory and transdisciplinary methodologies, in line with activist practices that emphasize collaboration. The interdisciplinarity evident in the results underscores the value of integrating the arts and social sciences to address social problems holistically. This collaboration enriches activist projects, allowing for more sensitive and impactful approaches (Cliff and Camic, 2016 ; Eisner, 2004; White, 2009).

Art plays an important role in community empowerment and social visibility within activist practices by acting as a mirror that reflects and challenges norms and inequalities, fostering critical dialogue and driving change. Beyond its expressive function, art becomes a strategic tool in social work and pedagogy, serving as a technical resource for social intervention. According to Blanco and Cidrás (2019), integrating art in education not only improves teaching, but also equips students with critical skills and social awareness, enabling them to influence and transform their environment. This positioning of engaged art underscores its importance in the construction of a more just and conscious society.

## 6. Conclusion

The first objective of the study highlights how activism, rooted in Paulo Freire's conscientization model, effectively converges between art and social pedagogy, bringing about transformations at the personal and community levels. The academic profile of the research participants underscores the importance of this intersection, as they systematize and ground the practice of activism in Spain. These activists adopt and adapt artistic elements, integrating them into social and educational processes, underlining the relevance of their work in the advancement of innovative pedagogical and social methods.

The ability of activist practices to incite critical reflection, raise social awareness and encourage participation in community problem solving is crucial. This interdisciplinary approach not only enriches artistic practice, but also highlights the need for continuous and multidisciplinary training of the professionals involved, thus ensuring that art maintains a substantial role in social transformation.

Methodologically, the research underlines the need to create an interdisciplinary environment to implement activist projects, urging professionals in the social field to explore and take advantage of the potentialities of art. This synergy between art and social pedagogy is manifested in art's ability to influence perception, thought and action within the community, favoring the creation of accurate diagnoses and the fostering of effective engagement. By considering art as a technical resource within the awareness-raising model, a holistic approach is facilitated, allowing activists to play an active role in all phases of the model, from awareness-raising to transformative action.

Therefore, the integration of activism in traditionally separate fields, such as art and social pedagogy, not only promotes meaningful and transformative learning, but also well-being and the improvement of living conditions through education and social action. Ultimately, this leads to the assertion that artistic practices, understood as awareness-raising tools, are essential for good living and the construction of a more conscious and equitable society.

The second research objective explores how artistic mediations focused on issues of injustice, inequality and social exclusion influence students' perception and understanding of art. The results indicate that exposure to activist practices not only enriches students' understanding of art as a form of personal expression, but also prompts them to adopt an activist perspective. This approach fosters the development of critical awareness and greater empathy towards different socio-cultural realities. This confirms the hypothesis that art can be a powerful tool in education, capable of fostering not only creativity but also active social engagement.



Student participation in engaged arts experiences has been shown to have a significant impact on their ability to connect with complex social issues. The interdisciplinarity highlighted by the study reflects the effectiveness of a holistic approach integrating the arts and social sciences, which enriches the impact of activist projects and fosters a more effective treatment of social issues. Furthermore, it has been observed that participatory and transdisciplinary methodologies not only foster collaboration, but also broaden students' perspectives, allowing them to explore and actively participate in social transformation.

Although some topics, such as the intersection of art and social intervention, were not widely discussed by students, categories such as Education, Training and Access to spaces for expression received greater attention, highlighting the importance of art in personal development and as a means of free and accessible expression. This suggests that while the understanding of art as a tool for social intervention needs greater emphasis, its value in personal and community empowerment is well recognized and valued by students.

Finally, the results underscore art's ability to act as a social mirror that reflects and questions existing norms and inequalities, proposing alternatives and encouraging critical dialogue. This duality of art as a means of personal expression and as a tool for social awareness reinforces its essential role in education, preparing students not only to appreciate aesthetics, but also to use art to promote a more just and conscious society.

Author contributions: S.D.-L., V.M.-V. and P.G.-R. conceived and reviewed all the studies, performed the analyses and wrote the article. All authors have read and accepted the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research has not received external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Code of Good Scientific Practice developed by the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC Ethics Committee).

Conflicts of interest: The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

## 7. Acknowledgments

This study has not received external funding, but is linked to the Project Creation of educational resources for the development of creativity. Code: PINE-FCCED2505.

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