COVID-19 AND VISUAL ARTS EDUCATION: A Literature Review for Post-Pandemic Citizenship

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to analyse the extant research on university education in the visual arts in the context of COVD-19, in order to ascertain the most salient concepts on the subject. The methodology comprised a systematic review of the extant literature in the databases Dialnet, ERIC, Scopus, Proquest and Google Scholar, between 2020 and 2024, based on the following descriptors: visual arts; COVID/pandemic; university/higher education. A total of 36 texts were obtained for the purposes of this study. The categories that emerged from this study included the emotional aspects of student-teacher relationships, the merits and challenges of emergency remote teaching in visual arts, the notion that the technical instruction of artistic disciplines is not particularly transferable to online education, training strategies for specific practical and theoretical subjects, experiences in research projects and service-learning, and the potential of virtuality for international teaching cooperation.

1. Introduction

Research Despite the paucity of research into the experience of university education in the visual arts during the pandemic, it is clear that there is a need for greater understanding of the most researched aspects of the teaching-learning process in different subjects, especially the practical ones. This knowledge can provide valuable information for the generation of new didactic strategies in online education, whether in the framework of a virtual training programme or in the event of emergencies. This is the purpose for which this topic is approached as a research gap. The objective is to facilitate a more profound comprehension of the fundamental elements that will enable the formulation of tactical decisions and the direction of modifications, thereby facilitating genuine progress in the realm of online and hybrid education in the visual arts at the university level, with a view to enhancing its quality.

The objective of this systematic review is to ascertain the issues that were of significance for higher education in the visual arts during the pandemic. The objective of this study is to provide an answer to the following research question:

- Which aspects were deemed most pertinent by the research in the context of university higher education in the visual arts during the COVD-19 pandemic?

A plethora of texts on this issue have enumerated a number of contents to be considered. A systematic literature review is a research method that can be utilised to identify problems and emerging defining concepts, highlight areas of controversy and agreement, and identify possible gaps for future research.

In light of the recent declaration that the pandemic has come to a close, it is imperative to refrain from a return to in-person interactions without a thorough examination of the lessons learned. The present moment is indeed opportune for a review of the extant literature and a reflection on online education, with consideration for the limitations that prevailed during this period and the manner in which they were addressed. In this regard, it is important to acknowledge the dedication of teachers who strive to offer meaningful learning experiences despite the challenges posed by virtual learning environments. Consequently, as will be demonstrated, the associated scientific output included not only analytical articles but also a substantial number of reflective essays, which should be particularly prized in the context of the renewal of methodologies and strategies.

This research work has been conducted within the framework of the doctoral programme Training in the Knowledge Society of the University of Salamanca and constitutes part of the thesis project "Higher education in the visual arts facing the challenge of the pandemic: a case study".

2. Methods

As a methodological approach, the present article employs systematic literature review (SLR), with a search process based on previously established inclusion and exclusion criteria for documents related to the topic of interest (MacMillan et al., 2019). The objective is to develop a contemporary theoretical framework and state-of-the-art approach for a documentary analysis, informed by the interpretation of extant research related to the object of study (García-Peñalvo, 2022; Kitchenham y Charters, 2007). The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol was adhered to during the various stages of the process with the objective of ensuring ethics and traceability.

The objective of this SR is to retrieve the available information on the subject from original documents contained in various international databases and present it in an organised manner. The review was conducted between May and June 2024. In the initial phase of preparation, the eligibility criteria were defined, with a consideration of articles from scientific journals, book chapters and conference proceedings. The descriptors or keywords to be used for the searches were defined, and various databases were explored until the following were selected as the most appropriate: Dialnet, ProQuest, ERIC, Scopus, and Google Scholar. In the subsequent phase, the documents were subjected to screening. This process entailed the exclusion of duplicate sources, followed by the application of exclusion criteria. The abstracts were then subjected to a process of review, the purpose of which was to ascertain their relevance and true relationship to the object of study. Finally, the selected texts were subjected to close analysis in order to identify any emergent characteristics and categories. The resulting information was organised for discursive presentation and in graphs, discussing the findings and providing conclusions.

Figure 1: Flowchart of the document cleaning phases.
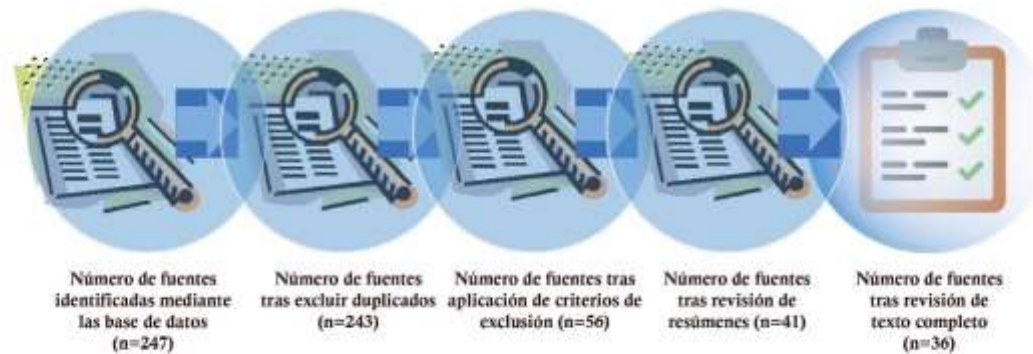
Source: Own elaboration, 2024.

In this particular RSL, a search chain defined by descriptors was divided by Boolean operators. The following were observed: The search terms employed were "visual arts" (AND) "COVID" (OR) "pandemic" (AND) "university" (OR) "higher education".

As illustrated in Figure 1, the process of screening involved a series of phases to identify the final number of sources, which amounted to a total of 36. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are outlined in Table 1. The final information from the refined documents was systematised in a literature review matrix as a synthesis tool (see Table 2).

Table 1. Criteria for inclusion and exclusion of referenced documentation

CRITERIA	INCLUSION	EXCLUSION
Thematic	Theme related to visual arts education and the pandemic of COVID-19	Non-focus on visual arts education and the COVID-19 pandemic
Context	Context of higher education	Applied in other educational contexts
Language	Language understood by researchers (English, Spanish)	Language not understood by researchers
Academic area	Applies to careers in visual arts or plastic arts.	Does not apply to visual arts or fine arts majors
Types of documents	Articles published in research journals, book chapters or proceedings	Not published in research journals or book chapters or proceedings
Period of publication	Published between 2020 and 2024	Not published between 2020 and 2024
Availability	Accessible through the University's subscription databases.	Not accessible through the University's subscription databases.

Source: Own elaboration, 2024.

Table 2. Literature review matrix

DOCUMENT	METHODOLOGY	COUNTRY	BASE
Martín Hernández, R. & Rey Somoza, N. (2021)	Qualitative	Spain	Dialnet
Nguyen, T. D. (2023)	Quantitative	Vietnam	
Winters, T. (2021)	Qualitative	New Zealand	ERIC
Heaton, R. & Chan Lai Kuan, S. (2022)	Qualitative	Singapore	
Sutters, J. P., Kardambikis, C. & Silva, S. (2022)	Qualitative	United States	
Johnson, R., Cantrell, K., Cutcliffe, K., Batorowicz, B., & McLean, T. (2023)	Qualitative	Australia	

Cutcliffe, K., Batorowicz, B., Johnson, R., Cantrell, K. & McLean, T. (2024)	Qualitative	Australia	
Antúnez del Cerro, N. & García Molinero, S. (2023)	Quantitative	Spain	Scopus
Múnera, B. (2021)	Qualitative	Colombia	ProQuest
Ergin, D., Gürbüz, A. & Sakarya, G. (2021)	Quantitative	Turkey	
Feng, D., Xiang, C., Vongurai, R. & Pibulcharoensit, S. (2022)	Quantitative	China	
Hernández-Chavarría, F. & Alpízar-Jiménez, V. (2020)	Qualitative	Costa Rica	
Dilmaç, S. (2020)	Qualitative	Turkey	
Iribas Rudín, A. (2020)	Qualitative	Spain	
Álvarez Niño, C., Varela Jaramillo, P. A., Cubides Guzmán, A. & Garzón, E. A. (2021)	Qualitative	Colombia	
Patiño Núñez, A. (2021)	Qualitative	Peru	
Fumero Vargas, P. (2021)	Quantitative	Costa Rica	
Llobet Sarria, J. & Fernández Pons, L. (2021)	Qualitative	Spain	
Llobet Sarria, J., Grau Costa, E., Ros Vallverdú, J. & Porquer Rigo, J. M. (2021)	Qualitative	Spain	
Miranda, F. (2021)	Qualitative	Uruguay	
Aruna, A., Aziza Fitriya, U., Putri Ishlah, N. F., Inayah, L. & Rai Arimbawa, A. G. (2021)	Qualitative	Indonesia	
Chaparro Huauya, B. L. (2021)	Qualitative	Peru	Google Scholar
León Celis, M. (2021)	Qualitative	Mexico	
Pozzi Escot, R. L. & Centurión Bolaños, O. (2021)	Qualitative	Peru	
Herrera Záraten, A.R. & Silva Cañaveral, S J. (2022)	Qualitative	Colombia	
Picado, V. (2022)	Qualitative	Costa Rica	
Martínez Vérez, M. V., López Méndez, L. & Albar Mansoa, J. (2022)	Qualitative	Spain	
Haydeé Mattanó, S. (2022)	Qualitative	Argentina	
Albar Mansoa, P. J. & Antúnez del Cerro, N. (2022)	Qualitative	Spain	
Borim, S. & Kyungeun L. (2022)	Qualitative	United States	
Yépez-Reyes, V. and Crespo, C. (2022)	Qualitative	Ecuador	
Pillacela Chin, L. A. (2023)	Qualitative	Ecuador	
Sánchez, D. J., Bang, N. A., Molina, L. H. & Zubiaurre, M. (2023)	Qualitative	Argentina	
Tarela, M. (2023)	Qualitative	Argentina	
Pillacela-Chin, L. A. & López-San Segundo, C. (2024)	Qualitative	Ecuador	
Rojas Cuevas, R. M., Morales González, C. G. & Cázares Cerda, G. I. (2024)	Qualitative	Mexico	

Source: Own elaboration, 2024

In the content analysis, the salient concepts were coded and integrated into emerging, relevant and well-differentiated categories (Cáceres, 2003). The coding was conducted with the research question as a guiding principle. From the discourse and based on the predominant tendencies observed in the corpus, inferences were made which gave rise to a broad discussion and conclusions.

3. Results

Of the total 36 documents, 11 (31%) were in English and 25 (69%) in Spanish (see Figure 2). Five of these (14%) employed a quantitative approach, while the majority of 31 texts (86%) utilised a qualitative approach (Figure 3).

Among the texts adopting a qualitative approach, there was a prevalence of theoretical reflection (n=18), frequently in the form of first-person narratives with a descriptive and argumentative tone, devoid of excessive scientific pretensions. These are analyses of the educational circumstances experienced, in which the authors, from a particular perspective, reveal their practice and the adjustments made to their subjects in response to the demands of lockdown and, to a lesser extent, during hybrid education.

Figures 2 and 3. Distribution of documents by language and methodological approach

Source: Own elaboration, 2024.

With regard to the temporal distribution, it is evident that the number of relevant documents peaks in 2021 (n=14), experiences a decline in 2022 (n=10), and subsequently exhibits a gradual decrease until the present (Figure 4). This high percentage in 2021 can be attributed to the fact that the majority of the texts are qualitative pedagogical reflections on the confinement stage. It is noteworthy that three research studies have been identified thus far in 2024, thereby underscoring the continued pertinence of the subject. However, with the pandemic coming to a close, it has been superseded by more pressing contemporary issues. Regarding the geographical distribution of the documentary provenance (see Figure 5), the texts analysed originate from 16 nations across 4 continents: The geographical areas under discussion are the continents of America, Asia, Oceania and Europe. The studies carried out by researchers from Spain are of particular note: a total of seven (19%).

Figure 4. Time distribution of analysed documents
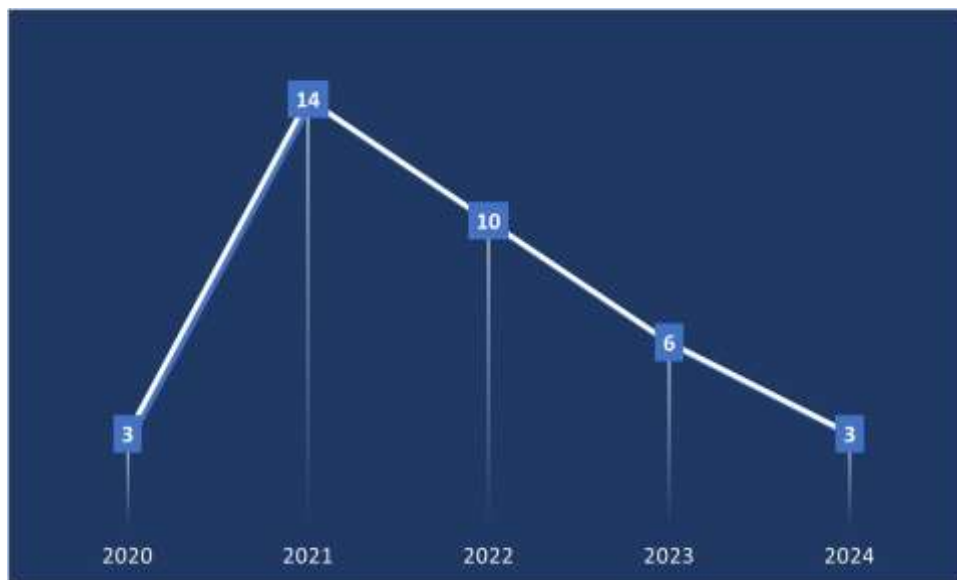
Source: Own elaboration, 2024.

Figure 5. Distribution of documents by country

Source: Own elaboration, 2024.

4. Analysis

A number of emerging concepts were identified through a detailed analysis of the selected papers. It was found that they frequently investigated the emotional conditions of students and teachers, the advantages and disadvantages of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) (Hodges et al., 2020), the visual arts, and the recognition that technical instruction in the disciplines is fundamentally a person-to-person didactic experience. It is evident that certain texts were case studies which were unique to practical and theoretical subjects. In addition, training strategies were a frequent topic of discussion, with the potential for internationalisation of teaching in a virtual setting being a particular point of interest. The results of the implementation of research and service-learning projects were identified as a recurrent theme.

The emotional climate of students and teachers during the confinement stage of the pandemic was a significant concern. In general, the mental health of both groups was affected by psycho-emotional disorders (Antúnez del Cerro & García Molinero, 2023). In the context of Singaporean Arts Faculties, a study by Heaton and Chan Lai Kuan (2022) identified tensions and issues among teaching staff concerning feelings of undervaluation and misunderstanding. In certain contexts, art and artists were regarded as being of no importance to a world in the midst of a pandemic.

It is evident that a significant proportion of students encountered unequal opportunities and marginalisation when education was transitioned to an online format. The challenges faced by the participants in this study were not only limited to the unavailability of electronic equipment and connectivity, but also the scarcity of fundamental materials such as coloured pencils (Ergin et al., 2021). In this sense, the article by Antúnez del Cerro & García Molinero (2023) seeks to recuperate notions from the philosophy of care. The establishment of a more affectionate, sensitive and supportive teacher-student relationship would have the effect of improving the quality of education, and would also lead to greater involvement and motivation on the part of the students. However, the lack of interest on the part of institutions in addressing these aspects, as well as their apparent lack of empathy, is revealed by their preoccupation with the promotion of information and communication technologies (ICT) for online education.

A considerable number of articles have been published which address the emotional difficulties experienced by students when undertaking online visual arts education. The prevailing challenges of loneliness, isolation and demotivation were addressed through the lenses of assertiveness, positivity and resilience (Dilmaç, 2020). A radical decline in interest in artistic disciplines, even among those pursuing vocational pathways, was emphasised. The advent of online education has the potential to render creative experimentation a tedious exercise. The anticipation of observing a work of art, or of a

colleague's work, through the screen, irrespective of the degree of image resolution, has been demonstrated to diminish a significant amount of grace and aesthetic uniqueness. The loss of the Benjaminian aura, so characteristic of our age of digital technical reproducibility, was discussed by Haydeé Mattanó (2022).

A range of arguments were presented in favour of and against the use of ERT in the visual arts. In contrast to the prevailing paradigm, it is argued that hardware should be considered secondary to heartware. In the context of artistic practice, it is proposed that the heart should take precedence over ICTs, irrespective of the presence of political and economic interests in cultivating an ICT-based culture (Heaton & Chan Lai Kuan, 2022). It has also been demonstrated that online education training, delivered spontaneously to teachers with limited digital skills or experience in techno-pedagogical contexts, and perhaps basic software literacy, has been instrumental in the successful delivery of courses (Ergin et al., 2021; Iribas Rudín, 2020; Pillacela-Chin, 2023).

As Ergin et al. (2021) demonstrate, issues of connectivity, accessibility to digital resources and technological problems were highly prevalent. A direct relationship has been demonstrated between the performance of art students in Chinese universities and their level of satisfaction with the e-learning systems applied (Feng et al., 2022). It is noteworthy that the selection of suitable programmes exerts a discernible influence in this context, given the prevailing assumption that students, being digital natives, would inherently adapt to any form of ICT, a supposition that has been demonstrated to be fallacy (Iribas Rudín, 2020; Sánchez et al., 2023).

The extant literature has identified a number of platforms. Padlet, due to the functionality of its interface, which is similar to a virtual whiteboard, allowed working with visual content from different collaborative pedagogical approaches that were very effective for teaching the arts (Cutcliffe et al., 2024; Johnson et al., 2023). This resource has been employed in a variety of contexts, including creative exercises facilitated by peer-to-peer feedback (Borim & Kyungeun, 2022) and activities supported by drawings generated around a research question, which were subsequently reflected upon through online interaction (Heaton & Chan Lai Kuan, 2022).

The Zoom video conferencing system was also valued as the preferred medium for synchronous virtual classes and for its qualities to encourage discussion and interaction (Winters, 2021). However, it has been asserted that students occasionally declined to activate the camera, opting instead to remain with their "black screens," a term that has been coined to denote this phenomenon. This has led to a decline in teacher motivation, as they perceive themselves to be talking to themselves (Picado, 2022). Conversely, a reduced level of anxiety was reported by some subjects when the camera was switched off, which consequently resulted in a higher rate of participation (Winters, 2021). Conversely, the utilisation of Zoom was perceived to demonstrate a deficiency in institutional control (Haydeé Mattanó, 2022).

A substantial body of research has reached a consensus that the future of education is contingent on e-learning. While the experience of the pandemic has contributed to the accumulation of knowledge and the development of this field, there are still shortcomings (Feng et al., 2022; Johnson et al., 2023; Pillacela-Chin, 2023).

It is incumbent upon both universities and governments to establish educational policies that meet all expectations. Technologically, there is still much to innovate in the realm of online and hybrid learning models. The latter option, the fusion between virtual and face-to-face classrooms, is considered the most advisable transitional alternative for the field of the arts (Martín Hernández & Rey Somoza, 2021; Mattanó, 2022; Winters, 2021). In any case, the feasibility of a real offer of fully online higher education in the visual arts should not be ruled out, which would mean opening up access opportunities for those living in remote communities, abroad, or deprived of their freedom (Dilmaç, 2020; Herrera Záraten & Silva Cañaveral, 2022; Picado, 2022). However, this would imply, at the very least, a significant accompaniment of teaching staff and perhaps the orientation of creative results towards digital art. In support of this thesis, it is noteworthy that, during the pandemic, students exhibited a tendency towards the creation of art utilising digital technologies (Antúnez del Cerro & García Molinero, 2023; Cutcliffe et al., 2024). Virtual media have become a prominent feature of contemporary art exhibited in museums and art galleries, where the boundaries between the viewer's experience of the physical and virtual artwork are increasingly indistinct (Heaton & Chan Lai Kuan, 2022).

Nonetheless, instruction in visual arts is widely regarded as being eminently practical in nature and necessitates face-to-face instruction. The transferability of this discipline to digitisation is negligible (Heaton & Chan Lai Kuan, 2022; Winters, 2021). The direct teacher-student relationship is imperative for the mastery of the creative arts, which is achieved through direct example, immediate feedback, and teacher demonstration of the work (Ergin et al., 2021). From the teacher's perspective, the act of observing the tangible results of these exercises, unmediated by digital interfaces, enhances the precision of their evaluative tasks. In this regard, a case study by Fumero Vargas (2021) at the University of Costa Rica revealed that between 25 and 50% of the subjects could be virtualised, according to teachers' perceptions. Theoretical content assignments have the potential to be more effectively adapted to virtual learning environments (Picado, 2022). However, specialised applied teaching, such as sculpture and painting, is more successfully delivered in person. For instance, the act of teaching modelling in a virtual environment presents a considerable challenge. Firstly, it is essential that students have access to the necessary materials and tools. Furthermore, the virtual class must be sufficiently personalised and demonstrative to provide a visual understanding of the steps required to successfully complete the task (Chaparro Huauya, 2021). However, it should be noted that modules or subjects requiring specialised tools, or a workshop environment could not be delivered remotely (Winters, 2021). Furthermore, there is a general perception that delivering technical demonstrations in the context of a real-time telematics class is very difficult (Fumero Vargas, 2021; Iribas Rudín, 2020).

During the period of the ERT, there was an observable decline in motivation and a concomitant increase in disinterest in the art. Interaction with the instructor as a support to master the technique is an important factor, and the consequent reduction of creativity and self-confidence in the students led to the need to increase the hours of the course (Dilmaç, 2020). Indeed, in the context of face-to-face attendance, the sense of companionship and community that is often cited as being an essential component of the constructivist learning process is absent in its online equivalent (Antúnez del Cerro & García Molinero, 2023; Cutcliffe et al., 2024; Fumero Vargas, 2021; Haydeé Mattanó, 2022; Johnson et al., 2023).

A number of articles concentrated on experiences in practical and theoretical subjects in emergency remote and blended learning settings. The instruction of painting was the subject of previous research (Iribas Rudín, 2020; Martín Hernández & Rey Somoza, 2021), as was graphic art, including linoleum engraving, woodcut and lithography (Hernández-Chavarría & Alpízar-Jiménez, 2020; Rojas Cuevas et al., 2024; Sutters et al., 2022) artistic or life drawing (Haydeé Mattanó, 2022; Patiño Núñez, 2021); sculpture, carving and ceramics (Aruna et al., 2021; Llobet Sarria et al., 2021; Llobet Sarria & Fernández Pons, 2021; Pozzi Escot & Centurión Bolaños, 2021; Tarela, 2023); photography (Múnera, 2021), and art history and criticism (León Celis, 2021; Sánchez et al., 2023).

Depending on the particularities of each subject, different degrees of compatibility with online learning were expressed and solutions were found. The corpus makes reference to a variety of didactic strategies grounded in experiential learning, with a concomitant emphasis on the merits and drawbacks of each approach. In certain subjects, students were instructed to fabricate tools or utensils utilising household or recycled materials. In other cases, homemade materials and alternative printing methods were employed. In the domain of figurative art, particularly in drawing and sculpture, the employment of self-portraits or the depiction of family members has been observed to imbue compositions with a heightened sense of intimacy and personal depth (Patiño Núñez, 2021; Pozzi Escot & Centurión Bolaños, 2021).

Llobet Sarria & Fernández Pons (2021) applied a tactic of ellipsis, typical of television cooking programmes, to their sculpture classes. This tactic involves the presentation of ingredients, followed by the sudden appearance of the cooked dish. In other cases, step-by-step photographs were presented, for instance illustrating the entire process of creating a mould. In certain instances, materials and furniture were conveyed to students via postal delivery (Pozzi, Escot & Centurión Bolaños, 2021).

As posited by Picado (2022), the utilisation of audio recordings, in the format of podcasts, is recommended for the purpose of encapsulating the fundamental concepts of the subject. This approach is advocated on the basis of the expeditious manner in which ideas are conveyed. The importance of visual aids in presentations is, in this author's opinion, of fundamental significance for the purpose of stimulating the attention of visual arts students, who have a predilection for visuality as a means of acquiring knowledge.

The utilisation of teacher-created instructional video recordings has been demonstrated to facilitate independent learning (Chaparro Huauya, 2021; Sutters et al., 2022). However, the utilisation of YouTube videos for educational purposes did not consistently garner the same level of appreciation among students as did videos prepared by teachers (Pillacela-Chin, 2023). It is important to note that the creation of videos necessitates a more extensive degree of planning and development. This assertion is supported by the observations of several writers, who have noted that virtual interactions demand a greater degree of preparation in comparison to face-to-face interactions (Picado, 2022). Conversely, the utilisation of video resources has become prevalent in the delivery of student work.

The utilisation of instructional guides for exercises served as a valuable support system for students, as it provided a reference point for clarification and facilitated teacher review. Conversely, Winters (2021) proposes that maintaining a record of ideas and reflections in a notebook fosters creativity. This visual diary functioned as a form of documentation and a means of control, as it was to be submitted as a requirement throughout the course.

A range of educational strategies is proposed with a view to arousing interest, curiosity and motivation, and to ensure that students acquire meaningful learning. As posited by Álvarez Niño et al. (2021), the notion of "disruptive pedagogies" is defined as the application of the B-learning model (Rojas Cuevas et al., 2024). Aruna et al. (2021) hypothesise that sculpture students lack an understanding of three-dimensionality, resulting in volumetric errors. To address this, they propose the implementation of an augmented reality virtual propaedeutic module as a remedial strategy.

Indeed, any virtual activity that encouraged interaction was met with appreciation, especially if it demonstrated a high level of communication, thus indicating the personal attention of the instructor (Borim & Kyungeun, 2022; Ergin et al., 2021). Indeed, the attitude of the teacher, and their willingness to interact with students on an interpersonal level, is also an element to be considered within the strategies. The concept of "soft skills" appears to emphasise that empathic and socioemotional skills are pivotal to pedagogical success (Chaparro Huauya, 2021; Fumero Vargas, 2021).

One of the primary strategies focused on the concept of feedback (Borim & Kyungeun, 2022). The optimal method for knowledge construction was identified as being feedback from teachers, students and peers. The utilisation of peer-to-peer comments and discussions has the potential to engender a dynamic shared learning environment. These interactions could occur in a synchronous videoconferencing scenario or subsequently via email, WhatsApp, comments on Moodle, Canvas, or Classroom. Nevertheless, due to their immediacy, students appear to have expressed a greater appreciation for real-time feedback during class sessions (Iribas Rudín, 2020). In this regard, Pozzi, Escot & Centurión Bolaños (2021) place significant value on cloud storage platforms, given their utility in the creation of digital portfolios or logbooks. These platforms are widely regarded as a highly recommended resource for the purpose of recording work, providing feedback and corrections, and assessing student progress.

Virtual exhibitions, such as those found in applications including Kuntsmatrix, People Art Factory and Artsteps, have been utilised as end-of-course exhibitions or as a component of project conclusions (Herrera Záraten & Silva Cañaveral, 2022). These actions were employed as a means of motivation and as a practical framework for the professionalisation of the subjects involved. Conversely, certain articles have concentrated on analysing the utilisation of social networks for diverse purposes within the domain of higher visual arts studies, including educational activities, image storage, the sharing of creative works, peer-to-peer interaction, artistic promotion, and professional networking (see: Álvarez Niño et al., 2021; Dilmaç, 2020; Pillacela-Chin, 2023; Pillacela-Chin & López-San Segundo, 2024; Rojas Cuevas et al., 2024). The utilisation of these platforms as a pedagogical strategy aimed to enhance students' motivation. Llobet Sarria et al. (2021), for instance, describe an exercise in which each student uploaded three photographs to an Instagram account, with the class contributing to the dynamic by writing comments.

The utilisation of networks for the collection of information and visual references was also observed. In this regard, the terms "visual research" and "visual contextual research" have been proposed to describe the process of searching for reference or inspirational images on the Internet, which will subsequently be used to develop students' creations (Pillacela-Chin, 2023; Winters, 2021). In this regard, it is important to note that copyright and intellectual property rights of third parties can be

impacted. While this issue is not often given significant attention, there are articles, such as Nguyen's (2023), which specifically address this concern by focusing on students from Vietnamese universities during the period of the pandemic.

It is important to note the prevalence of creative works with a central theme of the pandemic. It was widely recognised among teaching staff that students' sensitive expressions and personal experiences of these unusual circumstances should be articulated through artistic means, serving as a means of escape. A comprehensive production centred on the impact of the pandemic on daily life during periods of confinement and online educational activities resulted in the adaptation of the syllabuses for various subjects (Haydeé Mattanó, 2022; Sutters et al., 2022). It was challenging to avoid exposure to the currency of the issue, which was a prominent feature in global news outlets. Teachers and students reported feelings of fear and uncertainty in the face of the bleak outlook. The utilisation of art as a medium for personal expression served as a conduit for the articulation of these sentiments.

The utilisation of art as a therapeutic medium has been demonstrated to facilitate effective coping with challenging emotional circumstances (Rojas Cuevas et al., 2024). Consequently, from a pedagogy of hope and resilience in the face of adversity, it was deemed appropriate to address the issue (Borim & Kyungeun, 2022; León Celis, 2021). This approach was adopted as a strategy to foster a sense of community and facilitate mutual understanding through artistic endeavours.

This finding indicates that educators were keen to ascertain students' experiences of the transition to online education, with a view to evaluating their perceptions and exploring the potential for implementing adaptations or enhancements in teaching methodologies. The objective was to provide students with a platform to articulate their experiences, particularly during the confinement phase (Patiño Núñez, 2021). A number of the documents analysed present reflective images of the pandemic from the student body. The works in question serve as a medium for comprehending and interpreting the world, offering a diverse array of perspectives ranging from the most intimate to the socio-political.

A number of studies have been conducted on research-creation projects, service-learning and its links with society. The latter focus on the support, solidarity and social function of art from the university. Herrera Záraten & Silva Cañaveral (2022) describe a research-creation project entitled ARTGRALAB. This project was intended to function as a crucible for experimentation in graphic arts, combined with the new digital technological possibilities that emerged with the ERT. In contrast, a service-learning project is presented in the text by Álvarez Niño et al. (2021), where a group of teachers established a solitary arts education training agenda (comprising workshops and virtual creation laboratories), which supported students in paying their tuition fees. Another project is reflected in the article by Martínez Vérez et al. (2022), which describes how people affected by Alzheimer's and early dementias who were isolated in their homes during the third wave of the pandemic were cared for. The family members were trained as mediators, and studies were carried out on people's life journeys, memory and identity through audiovisual creation. In the context of certain projects, student participation is a constituent element, as evidenced by the project referenced by Albar Mansoa and Antúnez del Cerro (2022). This project is specifically focused on the artistic education of children and adolescents who have been hospitalised due to complications arising from the novel coronavirus. The students designed workshop-boxes, or art chests, which contained creative activities intended for use by sick children and to promote their well-being. In a similar vein, another service-learning project was described by Yépez-Reyes and Crespo (2022). This project entailed the establishment of a virtual ceramics workshop for a community in the Andean páramo. The initiative was meticulously designed to interweave this endeavour with processes of recovery of communal memory and revitalisation of the vernacular language of the area. The art of ceramics is a symbolic element in the reconstruction of their world from an intercultural perspective.

Finally, the documentary selection demonstrates the existence of a drive to exploit connectivity in cyberspace to establish cooperation with professors from different universities on a global scale and "mobilise" them to share their knowledge through videoconferences (Martín Hernández & Rey Somoza, 2021; Miranda, 2021). This particular pedagogical approach, characterised by collaborative leadership and shared responsibility, emerged as a notable strength in the observed practices. The advent of virtuality has facilitated the establishment of effective collaborative relationships between geographically distant institutions (Chaparro Huauya, 2021). The incorporation of international experts

through dialogue or meetings has been demonstrated to enhance the quality of online education (Herrera Záraten & Silva Cañaveral, 2022).

5. Conclusions

This systematic literature review has highlighted concepts that were of significance to undergraduate visual arts education research during the period of the pandemic from 2020 to mid-2024. These concepts imply trends and variables of study from a global spectrum. The papers analysed were chiefly devoted to the psycho-emotional conditions of students and teachers, the pros and cons of emergency remote teaching, and the impression that technical training in the creative disciplines is not very transferable to virtual education. The presentation outlined innovative training strategies, with a particular focus on practical subjects. It also referenced experiences in research and service-learning projects, as well as the potential for international online mobilisation of teachers.

It is evident that the subject attained a zenith of scientific interest in 2021, subsequently exhibiting a decline, a phenomenon that can be rationalised in light of the conclusion of the pandemic in May 2023 and the subsequent shift in research focus towards more pressing issues in the domains of arts and university education. The paucity of research in this area forms the foundation of the paper's rationale, particularly in light of the fact that no comprehensive research or literature review has yet been conducted to identify the pertinent factors in the domain of higher education in visual arts during the COVD-19 pandemic. In the absence of such a study, it would not be possible to consider alternatives and solutions to contingencies such as health emergencies, socio-political upheavals or natural disasters, situations that would possibly prompt education systems to revert to the online option.

In addition to demonstrating a state-of-the-art approach, this systematic review signifies a pioneering endeavour to explore the intricacies of the experience of university visual arts education in the context of the pandemic. The subsequent phase will entail the recovery and analysis of the lived experiences, a process which will give rise to sub-themes that could be addressed in greater depth at a future date. Indeed, the identification of these emerging categories has the potential to inform the development of virtual and hybrid teaching programmes, leveraging the synergies between the distinct characteristics of each artistic discipline and ICT. In this context, it is essential to consider the orientation of the didactic strategies employed and the efforts to humanise telecommunication, which have the potential to enhance the academic performance of students. This study provides a set of guidelines that institutions and governmental decision-makers can use to initiate a process of educational transformation.

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