

PROLOGUE

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We are living through a pivotal global moment for arts education. Over the past two years, new international commitments, urgent debates, and renewed collaborations have positioned culture and the arts not as peripheral enrichment, but as essential foundations for sustainable, equitable, and creative futures. However, this takes place within a landscape where arts institutions are threatened, funding is scarce, and STEM is increasingly prioritised. Yet global issues persist within our communities, and across our environments. These issues require the intrinsic qualities fostered by arts education to be advocated for like never before. We as artists know the power of arts education and we exclaim: We will not bow down.

This issue of *Invisibilidades* brings together scholarship that resonates deeply with the priorities articulated in UNESCO's Framework for Culture and Arts Education (2024) where the WAAE was present at its adoption in Abu Dhabi, and with the themes and dialogues that shaped the WAAE International Arts Education Week 2025. The World Alliance for Arts Education has been proactive in responding to the current needs of arts education, including through the creation and support of the Athens Declaration, developing out of the WAAE Global Arts Education Summit Athens 2024, Arts, Nature, Technology, Education: Harmony in Unity, in collaboration with the University of Athens.

As someone working at the intersection of artistic practice, education and leadership, I have witnessed how these frameworks and global events are reshaping our field in practical and grassroots ways. Not only do they offer direction but also an expanded sense of purpose that acknowledges the arts as sites of knowledge, cultural vitality, democratic participation, and human flourishing. They cement our understanding that creative practices and learning are profoundly relational and offer poignant ways of thinking, connecting, imagining, healing, and transforming. Most importantly, they reaffirm that all young people, communities, and nations must have the right to access the arts, not as luxuries, but as integral aspects of meaningful life.

This issue emerges at a time when arts educators, researchers, and practitioners across the world are being called to rethink their pedagogies, policies, and priorities in light of urgent global challenges. Climate instability, deepening inequality, technological acceleration, forced migration, cultural fragmentation, and social polarisation all place unprecedented pressures on education systems. Against this backdrop, arts education functions as a unique mode of response, one grounded in creativity, cultural memory, embodied intelligence, and collaborative problem-solving. The articles gathered here demonstrate how artists and educators are inventing new practices of care, critique, connection, and worldmaking in their everyday contexts. They show how global frameworks find life and meaning in local settings, and how local innovations, in turn, enrich global understandings of what arts education can be.

The adoption of the UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education invited UNESCO Member States to collectively commit to a shared international agenda that integrates culture and the arts across formal, non-formal, and informal education. The Framework recognises artistic and cultural learning as a matter of human rights, cultural rights, educational justice, and collective well-being. Its priorities of access, inclusion, sustainability, creativity, cultural diversity, and intersectoral collaboration are closely aligned with the values long upheld by the World Alliance for Arts Education.

What makes the Framework particularly significant is its insistence that arts education cannot remain isolated from the world's urgent challenges, and this is something we see in this issue of *Invisibilidades*. It explicitly positions culture and the arts as essential resources for climate action, peacebuilding, youth empowerment, gender equality, social cohesion, and cultural sustainability. It foregrounds the roles of artists, educators, cultural workers, and communities as co-creators of knowledge, rather than passive transmitters of tradition. It affirms artmaking pedagogies, values quality arts and cultural experiences and advocates for new ways of interacting ethically and imaginatively with our environments.

Across my work with WAAE, I have seen how the Framework has energised networks of educators and policymakers who were already striving to build stronger, more equitable systems. Its adoption has given international legitimacy to efforts that have long been happening on the ground, and it has opened new pathways for innovation, advocacy, and cross-border collaboration. This issue

of *Invisibilidades* contributes to that momentum by offering scholarship that exemplifies how arts education takes place in diverse contexts across the world.

Throughout these global developments, dance holds a unique and indispensable place. As a discipline rooted in the intelligence of the moving body, dance offers modes of learning that are sensory, relational, intuitive, and intercultural. It provides ways of understanding the world that cannot be accessed through text alone. Dance asks us to listen not only with our ears but with our weight, our breath, our timing, our capacity to attune to another person's movement. This embodied literacy is a powerful resource for education systems seeking to respond to the needs of young people today. Dance teaches negotiation, empathy, adaptability, presence, and trust. These skills are urgently needed in societies characterised by rapid change and uncertainty.

The connections between UNESCO's Framework, the 2025 Arts Education Week, and the scholarship presented in this issue invite us to consider a broader question: As arts educators, what futures are we committed to creating?

The arts give us tools for imagining beyond the constraints of the present. They help us navigate uncertainty by fostering adaptability, curiosity, and collaborative thinking. They cultivate the capacities needed to sustain democratic life, listening, interpreting, improvising, and engaging with difference. They enable us to rehearse possibilities, to practice courage, and to transform imagination into action. Dance teaches us how to move with and through complexity, how to inhabit vulnerability with agency, and how to reimagine our relationships with each other and with the world. It reminds us that knowledge does not live solely in texts or institutions but in bodies, gestures, rhythms, and shared experiences. As we look toward the future, the challenge before us is to ensure that arts education becomes not only more accessible but more deeply connected to the cultural, ecological, and social realities of our time. This requires partnerships across sectors, sustained advocacy, and the leadership of artists and educators who understand the transformative power of creative practice.

As I reflect on the work of the World Dance Alliance and the World Alliance for Arts Education, I am reminded that our global networks are strongest when we move together, across borders, disciplines, and perspectives. This issue stands as evidence of what becomes possible when we do so. I hope this special edition of *Invisibilidades* contributes meaningfully to the collective. May these articles inspire continued dialogue, critical inquiry, and a passionate arts education community. And may they strengthen our shared commitment to building educational systems that honour the arts as fundamental to human development, cultural vitality, and sustainable futures.