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Dissertation synopsis

The **contribution** of **drama** to the in-service **training** of teachers on human rights education

Nassia Choleva

The doctoral dissertation was carried out at the School of Early Childhood Education (SECEd) of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), Greece, under the supervision of Antonis Lenakakis (Associate Professor at SECEd, AUTH), with Argyris Kyridis (Professor at SECEd, AUTH) and Kostas Magos (Associate Professor at the Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Thessaly) as members of the three-member Advisory Committee. It was publicly defended in July 2022.

Today, teachers face a complex problem: on the one hand, they are challenged to serve the inflexible and demanding context of reproductive learning and on the other hand, holistic pedagogical methodologies developed in the 20th and 21st centuries pose demands for a more meaningful and effective education. In this constant tug-of-war, they are continuously faced with various dilemmas in terms of their work, for which they often find themselves ill-equipped.

This research deals with the crucial issue of human rights education, which is under constant negotiation, as a prerequisite for their effective protection and assertion. The research design is grounded in the wider field of drama in education and examines the ways in which it can contribute as a methodology to the repertoire of educators who address human rights issues with their students. The focus of the investigation is a drama-pedagogical training workshop for in-service teachers in order to explore four main research questions:

- 1) *Can a drama-pedagogical workshop contribute to the human rights training of teachers? If so, how?*
- 2) *In what ways do the drama-pedagogical workshop and its methodology contribute to teachers' further practice in terms of teaching human rights?*
- 3) *How do teachers in this research perceive their role within the new combination of human rights education and drama-pedagogical process?*
- 4) *How does the time factor influence the teachers' views and feelings about the drama-pedagogical training they received and their educational work?*

PART A lays the theoretical foundation for the research.

The first chapter examines the field of drama pedagogy through its basic pedagogical, aesthetic and dramatic origins as well as its socio-political dimensions. Its historical review and critical consideration are followed by an overview of the international community and the bodies treating the field. A brief review is made through the official documents that have influenced educational policy-making at the global level, through UNESCO, in the light of the 4th sustainable development goal. Next, a critical overview of the field's approaches in the Greek reality is attempted. The drama-pedagogical workshop is described structurally and methodologically, with a focus on its democratic processes and possibilities. Finally, the profile of the modern teacher is outlined, who is called upon to adopt and use drama methodologies in the context of his/her work.

The second chapter presents the path towards securing international law and human rights since the 20th century. The international debate on the conditions for implementing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is critically examined in the light of four dominant schools of thought on human rights. Subsequently, a historical review of Human Rights Education (HRE) under the umbrella of the UN and other organisations is attempted. The HRE field is presented in terms of its three dimensions: cognitive (education around HR), process (education through HR) and goal (education with/for HR). Subsequently, the particular place and potential of the arts, and especially drama, in HRE are explored. Finally, the role of the teacher who is asked to approach human rights issues is critically examined.

The third chapter maps, on the one hand, the position of HRE and drama pedagogy in pedagogical university departments in Greece. On the other hand, it attempts to record institutional teacher training and presents examples of independent training programmes on human rights and/or drama-pedagogical methodology.

PART B presents the mixed applied research, based on a twenty-hour drama-pedagogical workshop focusing on human rights issues. It was carried out in 16 cities in Greece with the participation of 444 teachers from all levels, between September 2018 and June 2020.

The fourth chapter presents the quantitative research. The central research questions are transformed into research hypotheses around three axes: a) How do teachers evaluate themselves and their practice before and after their participation in the drama-pedagogical training/intervention?; b) Is there a positive impact of the intervention on the participating teachers and how does the time factor influence this impact?; and c) Are there statistically significant within-group differences in the sample and, if so, is there a correlation between the participants' profile and these differences? Measurements were conducted in three phases (before the workshop, after the workshop and after the end of the school year). Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and statistical hypothesis testing were performed to analyse the data.

The fifth chapter presents the confirmatory qualitative research carried out between June and August 2020. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 teachers in the sample. Through thematic analysis, the findings were organised into three main thematic categories: a) participation in training and meeting needs, b) experimentation after participation in the training, and c) the teachers' profile, as it emerged through their practice (applying drama pedagogy methods for human rights education). The categorisation was made in accordance with the four central research questions and the three sets of research hypotheses stated in Chapter 4, in order to contrast and compare findings.

PART C (Chapter 6) of the dissertation includes the interpretive condensation of the findings of quantitative and qualitative research, centred on the four research questions as well as their critical consideration according to the theoretical foundation of Part A and the international literature and research. The research reaches two main conclusions:

- a) Drama as a methodology, and in particular the drama-pedagogical workshop, can serve all the dimensions of Human Rights Education for active teachers, namely education at the cognitive level, at the level of democratic processes and at the level of empowerment and emancipation of a group.
- b) Teachers who are energised and motivated in terms of their professional development and are substantially interested in the presence of human rights and the multisensory approach of

drama pedagogy as organic aspects of their educational work can benefit significantly from their participation in drama-in-education workshops and be sufficiently empowered to integrate these elements in their teaching and pedagogical work.

Nassia Choleva is a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Drama Pedagogy from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. She is an adjunct lecturer at the Theatre Studies Department of the University of Peloponnese, where she teaches drama pedagogy. She studied drama and theatre at the School of Drama (BA-MA, AUTH) and did postgraduate studies in Applied Drama (MA, Exeter University). She is a drama teacher in primary education, she facilitates drama groups in formal and non-formal education settings and trains in-service teachers. Since 2006, she has been designing and implementing drama education projects and research (European Union, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Office – Greece, Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network, ActionAid Hellas, etc.). In 2011, she was a member of an experts group at the Greek Institute of Educational Policy, where new arts and culture curricula were designed for Greek schools. She is the author of educational books and materials, and publishes research in scientific journals, edited volumes and conferences. She is a member of the Editing Committee of the *Education & Theatre* journal. Her recent research interests include the interconnection of drama pedagogy with human rights education, the personal and professional development of artists and educators through equitable partnerships and the combination of drama and artworks in interdisciplinary approaches to social issues.