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**Citizenship and Democracy: Social interaction abilities of adolescent students A transcultural study through social theatre in Mexico and Greece**

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# **Citizenship and Democracy:** **Social interaction abilities of adolescent students**

## A transcultural study through social theatre in Mexico and Greece

### *Dissertation synopsis*

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Doctoral dissertation,  
Universidad Veracruzana and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki – February 2021

**Christiana Moschou**

The doctoral dissertation arose through research questions and literature review. Theoretical parameters, previous research and established techniques of social theatre and educational drama were examined. Taking into account the conclusions of literature review, a theatrical intervention programme was developed to mobilise the political potential of adolescent students. A pilot implementation was designed and carried out in the city of Aguascalientes, Mexico. The feedback from this intervention shaped the actual field research of the dissertation, which took place in the cities of Aguascalientes and Thessaloniki. The final text consists of the following parts: introduction, six chapters where the dissertation is developed, bibliography and appendix.

The dissertation begins with an extended introduction to familiarise the reader with the problem under examination. For this reason, this section presents the modern meaning of democracy and the formation of citizenship. The presentation is enriched with examples of alternative coexistence, while the connection between social theatre and citizenship is described. In this way the object of study is defined; that is, the formation of citizenship through social theatre, which promotes the active participation of citizens. It is a type of political theatre that aims to give voice to people and emancipate them. Also, a review of literature on the formation of citizenship in relation to social theatre based on the principles of inter- and trans-disciplinarity is carried out and the dissertation's work plan is outlined. Furthermore, an initial connection with the school curriculum is attempted, placing the dissertation within a school context, since the educational system has been traditionally considered a space that favours the formation of citizenship.

In addition, the empirical framework is presented, that is, the academic field of the dissertation. It involves a pedagogical intervention, which aims to explore different ways of teaching social and political education under an experiential learning paradigm. To clarify the planning framework for this intervention, this chapter describes important trends in artistic theatre as well as the types of applied theatre. Then, the educational systems of Greece and Mexico are presented, with an emphasis on their provisions regarding political education in secondary schools and the various educational programmes that enrich the formal curriculum.

Furthermore, the theoretical framework of the political concepts affecting the intervention is introduced, followed by a presentation of two concepts: transculturalism and democracy. Each of these concepts provides essential conceptual elements for the understanding of the problem posed and the argumentation presented.

Transculturalism as a way of reading political and social reality gives meaning and promotes studies similar to this dissertation. The concepts of globalisation, global governance and the Global South in the cross-cultural context of modern era define a citizenship beyond national borders, where forms of political behaviour are determined by locality and worldviews. It could be said that Mexico and Greece have a similar position not in geographical terms but within the political mapping of global systems.

Common political and social characteristics between Greece and Mexico place the two countries among the regions comprising the "Global South", as defined by the theory of global systems. Cross-cultural and transcultural approaches to the countries of the Global South can contribute to a more

comprehensive understanding of the current social phenomena and political trends governing these nations, highlighting their similarities and leading to useful conclusions. Therefore, due to this relevance, a comparative study between these two countries not only facilitates the study of the phenomena within each one of them but also allows a more substantial understanding and treatment of problems that go beyond local conditions, given that they are based on an international political and social complex.

This dissertation studies Mexico and Greece through social theatre as a tool for expression and learning. However, the main topic of the dissertation continues to be the education of citizens in a democracy. The interdisciplinarity outlined in the introduction, theatre and drama as presented in the first chapter, transculturalism and the previously discussed concept of Global South as well as critical pedagogy to be presented in the chapter on epistemology constitute elements of a central argument about the common way in which citizens learn to form communities and foster qualities within democratic institutions. To frame all this, a definition of the concept is proposed in addition to active participation in democracy and citizenship.

The epistemology of the thesis is then examined within the theoretical foundations of critical pedagogy. The methodological design is presented as action research and the methodological elements are explained in detail. The presentation of field research is followed by an analysis of data and results: The profile of the schools before the intervention and its basic elements in addition to the topics discussed during the intervention. After examining all the information, the results are presented based on each data collection tool: observation, interview and journal. In conclusion, the results are integrated by methodological triangulation.

Returning to the axes outlined in the dissertation's title, the final chapter associates the conclusions with inclusive democracy and transculturalism, education for democracy and the formation of citizenship as well as the interaction of students in social theatre. Finally, conclusions, research limitations and the position of the dissertation are summarised. In terms of conclusions, the dynamics recorded during field research show a great difference between the groups of students in the two countries. Students who participated in Mexico seem to be more affected by compassion, while students in Greece appear to be guided by the intellect. However, the nature of the research, that is, a short-term study with a limited sample, does not allow for the results to be generalised. It is important to avoid illustrating

complete patterns and representations that can lead to stereotypical images. Still, this research demonstrates a trend that needs to be explored more carefully in future studies, both between these two countries and between the different social formations of the Global South.

Finally, democracy can become the political response to socio-political problems both at the level of central organisation and private relations that are still social and form a great part of civic culture. The governance of the state and the governance of associations and collectives require training in decision-making, previous experience in democratic environments, participation in the common space and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

#### Notes:

1. A double and joint doctorate between Universidad Veracruzana and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, as published in the Official Government Gazette B' 131/29-1-2016.
2. The dissertation supervisors were Dr Roberto Anaya, Universidad Veracruzana, and Dr Konstantina Ritsatou from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The advisory committee also included Dr José Matías Romo Martínez and Dr Antonis Lenakakis.
3. The doctoral research was funded by Mexico's National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT).
4. The title of the dissertation in Spanish is: *Ciudadanía y Democracia: habilidades de interacción social en estudiantes adolescentes. Un estudio transcultural en México y en Grecia a través del teatro social.*
5. The date of the dissertation defense was 4 February 2021.

**Christiana Moschou** is a graduate of the Department of Theatre Studies of the University of Athens and holds a master's degree in Psychopedagogy of Inclusion from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. In 2021 she received with honorable mention her doctoral degree for the dissertation *Citizenship and Democracy: social interaction abilities of adolescent students. A transcultural study through social theatre in México and Greece* by Universidad Veracruzana and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She works in education, participates in the Hellenic Scientific Association of Theatre Scholars (PESYTH) and is one of the founding members of the Regional Chapter of the European Democratic Education Community. She has directed social theatre performances in Greece and Mexico. In her artistic work and experience, drama and theatre were the means to express social solidarity, awareness, resistance and claim. The thread that connects the different theatrical approaches is locality and the female narrative.