

## THESIS ABSTRACT

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### LOS PROCESOS DE PARTICIPACIÓN DE LOS ADOLESCENTES EN ENTORNOS COMUNITARIO: UNA EXPERIENCIA DE CIUDADANÍA

**Autor:** Fonseca Peso, Janire.

**Directoras:** Dra. Concepción Maiztegui Oñate; Dra. Rosa María Santibañez Güber.

**Departamento/Instituto:** UNIVERSIDAD DE DEUSTO.

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The promotion of citizenship has become one of the central objectives in youth policy and documents (Benedicto, 2011). In this sense, the Council of Europe's proposal for democratic citizenship (2005) supposes an important reference point for later research, models and proposals from other international organisms, such as the European Commission's Active Citizenship (Hoskins, 2006), that combines education, human rights and citizenship to promote peace through justice and fundamental liberties. Such educational proposals require civic society to play a prominent role, and participation becomes the best educational tool, for it goes beyond the specific subjects set out in educational syllabuses (Navarro, Jacott & Maiztegui, 2011). From the educational standpoint, citizenship constitutes one of the narratives that frames both theoretical principles and educational practice (Marí Ytarte, Moreno and Hipólito, 2016).

This doctoral thesis addresses the theme of participation in community projects like citizenship educational environments. In consequence, it is based on the conception of citizenship "as a process", that enables an increase in the understanding of the participative processes and

citizenship experiences of adolescents in community programmes, where differences of how they are and how they act are inter-related, and new identities come into play (Biesta, 2016, p. 16). From this perspective, education for citizenship is centred round the development of participative capacities.

In this way, public spaces take on special relevance in the processes of experiencing and learning citizenship, since they become authentic "learning loci" (Morán, 2007). In the case of adolescents, contemplating the spaces they "occupy" is arousing more and more interest, since they are spaces adolescents identify themselves with, which they value and look after as their own spaces. In this sense, the projects and spaces carried out by non-formal education gain importance in "the exercising of citizenship" against the formal education system, because the very essence of the methodology, enables the incorporation of the idea of experimentation and process accompanied by adult persons.

From an ethnographic focus, for two school years (2013-2015), I took for my case study a municipal participative platform for adolescents between the ages of twelve and eighteen in order to gain a deeper understanding of the processes through which citizenship is developed and exercised and what characteristics make it a "school for citizenship". From the educational standpoint, it is indispensable to understand how exercising citizenship is learned, how it is transformed and transmitted by the groups who do exercise it, in order to promote its development in different educational contexts (Gil- Jaurena, Ballesteros, Mata & Sánchez-Melero, 2016).

**General objective:** To describe and understand the participative culture of a community programme targeting adolescents.

**Specific objectives and research questions:**

- To analyse the factors hindering and those facilitating the adolescent participation experience starting and the role played by adults in these processes.
  - o Which factors and/or processes facilitate adolescent participation in the platform?
  - o How are such factors/processes generated?
  - o Which factors and/or processes hinder adolescent participation in the platform?
  - o What are the motives behind such factors and/or processes?
  - o What role do adults play in the participative processes?
- To contrast the notions of citizenship and of a good citizen from the persons involved according to their experience and trajectory in the case study.
  - o What are the perceptions of the participating adolescents regarding citizenship and a good citizen?
  - o Can any differences be detected in such perceptions according to the level of participation the adolescents are experiencing inside the platform?

To gather data, I worked with three focus groups of an exploratory nature (with adolescents, their families and adults), I carried out 110 hours of participative observation I carried out a total of

29 interviews (27 with teenage participants, one with the town council expert and another with the service coordinator), besides documentation analysis. The research project was accepted and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Deusto (Ref: ETK-5/13-14). The main results are:

- Daily experiences in different areas provide action opportunities which are distinguished qualitatively and, therefore, in learning opportunities that they offer.
- With regard to elements facilitating and hindering participation:
  - o Novelty generates participation, but there are barriers that prevent initiatives from being seen, or cause people to abandon, especially in late adolescence when school demands become more evident.
  - o The discourses of participating adolescents provide a slight idea of the importance of the feeling to belong to the project in order to move up through the highest participation and responsibility levels.
  - o The educational strategies carried out by the educational team appear to become key aspects in the developing the sense of belonging to the platform, which will enable the later development of civic identity based on community values and actions.
- One of the most important findings is the influence of the age factor in participative processes and consequently of representations of citizenship.

## ESPACIOS Y PRÁCTICAS DE PARTICIPACIÓN CIUDADANA. ANÁLISIS Y PROPUESTAS EDUCATIVAS DESDE UN ENFOQUE INTERCULTURAL

**Autor:** Melero, Héctor S.

(orcid:0000-0001-5282-9943).

**Directoras:** Dra. Teresa Aguado e Inés Gil-Jaurena.

**Departamento/Instituto:** Doctorado en Educación. Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED).

**Fecha de defensa:** 2018.

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This thesis is located within the research on citizen learning developed by the INTER group (research in intercultural education - <http://bit.ly/G-INTER> -) of the National University of Distance Education (UNED) and aims to “Formulate educational

proposals for the learning of active citizenship from an intercultural approach”. Starting from the premise that citizen spaces are privileged places for learning citizen practice, the research tries to answer the question: “How do people who have a critical, participative and transformative citizen practice learn and teach how to exercise this practice?”

The theoretical framework deepens and connects three elements: 1) The **intercultural approach** is configured as a complex view of the world by recognizing its diversity and dynamism. So, reality is complex because it is constructed and reconstructed through the relationship and communication of individuals who are in turn diverse and changing. Therefore, the intercultural approach is constituted as a praxis, and a critical and transformative ethical-political project committed to equity, social justice and emancipation. 2) From here, **citizen participation** is a methodology

of the intercultural approach to ensure that the social transformation involves the largest number of groups and individuals, as well as recognizes the diversity of knowledge and interests in the design, execution and control of their praxis developed from democratic principles. In addition, citizen participation is connected through diverse approaches and the models of democracy, concluding that the models of deliberative, participatory and radical democracy could be coherent with the intercultural approach. 3) Finally, **education and citizen participation** are related, understanding that spaces for citizen participation are privileged places to learn citizenship because people learn to participate by doing it. This idea assumes that citizenship is a collective practice therefore the practice itself produces meaning and knowledge about democracy and its own practice. It also implies that in order to improve citizenship learning, it is necessary to improve democracy itself, since it's her exercise which produces such learning, in other words, to increase the democratic quality is to increase the quality of citizen learning.

The methodology used in the research is an ethnographic perspective because it is consistent with the epistemological positioning of the intercultural approach and the most appropriate to answer the research questions. Participant observation was made in three grassroots citizen spaces of the city of Madrid, [Somos Barrio - <http://bit.ly/SBarrio> -; Espacio Vecinal Arganzuela - <http://bit.ly/EVArganzuela> -; Radio Arganzuela - <http://bit.ly/tRadAr> -] plus an institutional space that serves

as a "contrast" [Proceso Mercado Legazpi]. The participant observation was developed from September 2015 to April 2017, concentrating the observations in the spaces from December 2015 to July 2016. Likewise, 29 interviews were conducted with 30 key informants (one was conducted with two informants simultaneously) seeking the greater diversity possible in the selection of participants (age, gender, group position and forms of participation). In total, 15 men and 15 women between the ages of 25 and 78 from the different spaces were interviewed.

Among the most relevant conclusions of the thesis is the construction of a model on the exercise and learning of civic practice that relates, in a complex way, the critical, participative and transformative elements of citizen practice through its praxis, that's to say, of its reflexive exercise; developing this praxis within an axiological and epistemic framework that is related from the people's cosmology or world view who make up these spaces. This vision assumes the complexity of the world and values it positively. The social world is complex because it is diverse, changing and relational, ideas that constitute the baseline on which critical, participatory and transformative citizen praxis is produced. Apart from this, the purpose of the thesis is managed by formulating educational proposals organized in three sections: a) the educational proposals for education professionals; b) proposals to improve the educational action of the citizen spaces themselves; and c) proposals for the training of education professionals.

### LA HISTORIA DE VIDA DE SHILA DELARGO. ANÁLISIS SOCIO-PEDAGÓGICO DE UN PROCESO DE 'REFORMA' JUVENIL

**Autor:** Herrera Pastor, David.

**Directoras:** Ma del Pilar Sepúlveda Ruiz y Ángel I. Pérez Gómez.

**Departamento/Instituto:** Didáctica y Organización Escolar | Universidad de Málaga.

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The research developed over these pages focuses on the case of Shila, a young Moroccan who, whilst still under-age, was arrested in Spain for drug trafficking. As a result, he was sentenced to a two-year rehabilitation process, divided into two separate orders: an initial stage at detention centre, and a second stage of probation. After completing his probation, he began working in a care home for

protected minors, initially as a monitor and then as an educator. He continues to work there today, a decade on.

One of the main reasons for carrying out this research was the extraordinary evolution of the case: as a result of the rehabilitation process, the protagonist of the story went from being a "young offender" to being an "educator of minors". The focus of the research was therefore to shed light on and analyse the key contributing factors in this process. A further aim was to know just how educational the process had been. In other words, to scrutinise the process from a socio-pedagogical perspective.

Although the research focused essentially on the youth rehabilitation process, the study was not limited solely to experiences from this period. This could only be done by having an overview of his whole life. In order to locate all key aspects and correctly interpret the overall effect of his experience at the youth justice system, the

biographical research methodology was chosen. Also, that methodology enabled counter-narratives questioning hegemonic discourses and had some ethics and political features which contribute to society emancipation from a pedagogical and democratic perspective (Herrera, Mancila y Kushner, 2017)<sup>1</sup>.

Various information collection techniques and different sources have been used to draft the biography. The more significant ones are listed in order to give the reader a better understanding: apart from interviewing Shila on several occasions for different purposes, a further seventeen individuals, all of whom played a significant role in the development of the story, were interviewed [here you can see a sample: Judge who handled the case; Detention Center (DC) Deputy Director; Social worker at the DC, and later Shila's boss in the association where he works now; Shila's Educator and Tutor at the DC; Staff who worked at the laundry in the DC, and later Shila's foster mother; Educator who tutored Shila during his probation period; Shila's brother].

With regard to sources of documentation: his record in the Youth Court and the file kept on him at the Directorate General of Youth Rehabilitation. The "Minors' Act" valid during the case has also been consulted. Additionally, 200 photographs were collected, most of them taken during his detention period.

The cross-narrative method (Lewis, 1973)<sup>2</sup> used here provided the opportunity to prepare a combined biographical account which has allowed the complete, holistic development of the story. The protagonist provided the main plot, which was supplemented with and/or contrasted by the other accounts and information, all of which led to an exhaustive construction of the reality under study and produced a polyhedral, significant and intersubjective text. In this research the account were crossed non-consecutively, what resulted an innovation from a narrative and scientific point of view.

The biography also sheds light on the reality experienced by "young offenders" during the rehabilitation process, which is often a dark area which has been the subject of very little study from a pedagogical perspective. As a result, the story provides the opportunity to know the rehabilitation process from the inside, from people who have experienced it first-hand.

As the research was set in an inductive and interdisciplinary manner, the theoretical foundations reviewed as many concepts as were emerged (from the Sociological, Criminological, Law and Educational sphere) and needed to cover the case complexity.

The report with the results are divided in two parts. In the first one, the reasons which took Shila to illegally migrate from his country and start criminal activities were analysed. In essence they were justified by the oppressed and deterministic situation he lived in his country of origin, in addition to his wishes to vitally promote. In the second one, all the social and educational actions developed during the rehabilitation process were examined. They clearly show that the intervention must not focus solely on transforming the person, but also helping him the reconfigure his social circumstances (Herrera y De-Oña, 2017)<sup>3</sup>.

Apart from them, other conclusions have been developed, highlighting: the intervention programme must be carried out in a personalised way, exercising a real educational accompanying [looking after the environment and the educator-educatee relationship during the process (Herrera y De-Oña, 2016)<sup>4</sup>] and networking (Varela, 2010)<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Herrera-Pastor, D., Mancila, I. y Kushner, S. (2017). A cross-narrative analysis in biographical inquiry. A research note. *The New Educational Review*, 48, n. 2, 285-296. DOI: 10.15804/tner.2017.48.2.23

<sup>2</sup> Lewis, O. (1973). *Los hijos de Sánchez: autobiografía de una familia mexicana*. México: Joaquín Mortiz.

<sup>3</sup> Herrera-Pastor, D. y De Oña-Cots, J.M. (2017). Personalizar la intervención educativa con menores en situación de riesgo es fundamental para su desarrollo, la igualdad de oportunidades y la justicia social. *Revista Internacional de Educación para la Justicia Social*, vol 6, nº 2, 149-165. <https://doi.org/10.15366/riejs2017.6.2.009>

<sup>4</sup> Herrera Pastor, D., & De Oña Cots, J.M. (2016). La importancia del ambiente de aprendizaje. Pedagogía ecológica en un centro de menores. *Revista Fuentes*, 18 (1), 77-90. DOI: doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12795/revista-fuentes.2016.18.1.05>

<sup>5</sup> Varela Crespo, L. (2010). La Educación Social y los Servicios Sociales en los procesos de desarrollo comunitario: revitalización del trabajo en red. *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 17, 137-148.