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## Artistic practices and citizenship: possible interconnection?

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### Introduction

The use and application of the term 'citizenship' in the context of education is complex. Its understanding and breadth do not encompass a consensual perspective; on the contrary, it is considered as something permanently contested due to the set of ambiguities and tensions it incorporates, in association with the different underlying meanings and connotations. In this sense, reflecting and questioning the multiple forms of interpretation and implementation in the educational field is essential to elaborate a dialectic that enables its understanding and operationality (Sacristán, 2003; Heater, 2004).

This text aims to contribute to a deliberation on the concept of 'citizenship education' and its clarification of different interpretations and associated dimensions, from a historical awareness (McLaughlin, 1992; Marshall & Bottomore, 1992; Abowitz & Harnish, 2006), from a philosophical and educational perspective (Dewey, 2007; Freire, 1970).

In recent decades, we are witnessing a society whose political, economic, cultural, and social changes register new forms of social relationships and coexistence and new proposals in the organization of modern democratic societies and their educational systems (Kerr, 1999; Sacristán, 2003; Banks, 2004; Kennedy, 2019), revealing new understandings about the notion of citizenship. Currently, the idea of citizenship is not restricted to its understanding associated with the simple adherence of its members to a nation-state. Although it is acknowledged that its understanding is interconnected with development in conjunction with that of the nation where it is inserted, nowadays, in an era of globalization, with migratory consequences, multicultural diversity, new means and information technologies, creation of new forms of community, etc.; the idea of citizenship is much broader and more complex. It highlights the participation and involvement of individuals in the activities carried out, in their interaction with others, in connection with their surroundings, fostering the growth of a greater individual and social responsibility. Thus, the present text intends to reflect on the term citizenship more largely, focusing on the social and cultural relationships of individuals, based on dialogue-based art education

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practices that help to overcome the obstacles inherent to the singularities and socio-cultural differentiations coexisting in our heterogeneous societies, creating new possibilities for training and acting of individuals for collective well-being (Freire & Caetano, 2014). The overriding issue is the ability to interconnect the value of the individual with their peers in society, without devaluing one or the other (Sacristán, 2003). Alongside this correlation is crucial to understand the singularities and the social and cultural differences that constitute citizenship (McLaughlin, 1992; Banks, 2004), underlying the meanings and connotations attributed to the contrasting interpretations of Western democratic societies (Arblaster, 2002; Carr, 1998; Carr & Hartnett, 1994).

Conditionings that, throughout the ideological transformations of societies, correspond to an interdependent relationship between the organizational structure of political States and the functional educational system (Kerr, 1999; Sacristán, 2003; Nogueira, 2015). In this sense, it will not be surprising that its definition and implementation in the various countries is according to their different social, economic, and political contexts (Kerr, 1999; Banks, 2004; Sacristán, 2003; Shor, 2004) and; for this reason, schools interpret and implement citizenship practices through their objectives, values, and principles (McLaughlin, 1992; Kerr, 1999). Therefore, there should be the possibility to constantly discuss and reflect on the issues between theory and *praxis* that involve its exercise, broadly, both among educators and among citizens in general (McLaughlin, 1992; Freire, 1970; Dewey, 2007). However, among conservative and progressive educators the discussion about whether or not the school should have a leading role in preparing active citizens for future participation is well known and widespread. The former argues for a more 'private' dimension of citizenship, not requiring education and the individual to play such an intervening role; the latter, arguing for a 'public' dimension, in favor of education has an essential role in the formation of the citizen, intervening and active in public and civic participation in society (Kennedy, 2019). In this context, the presente reflection recognizes the fundamental importance of education as a vehicle of knowledge, attitudes, and values of human rights and in training for a culture of citizenship, with evidence in the articulation and applicability of art education practices (Eça, 2010), as a contribution in promoting learning in open and collaborative experiences reinforcing the principles of importance and sense of community, relevant for a healthy democratic life (Caetano & Freire, 2014; Ramirez, 2016; Enslin & Ramirez-Hurtado, 2013; Kuttner, 2015).

## Interpretations of citizenship in democratic societies

In the historical-cultural context of Western societies, reflections on the beginnings of the so-called 'citizenship', as an experience and awareness of the importance of its members<sup>1</sup> in Ancient Greece, are well known (Leão, Ferreira, & Fialho, 2010). The central element of citizenship was the individual's participation in the political community, with active intervention in public activities, which involved the development of the self and the

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1 In Ancient Greece, the status of inequality between individuals (free men and non-free men) was recognized, and only free men could intervene in the public and political activities of the city (polis); that is, women, slaves or barbarians could not take part in the civic and political decisions of society (Cf. Leão; Ferreira & Fialho, 2010, p. 18).

community itself. Concerns inherent to the formation of the young citizen, which developed along with citizenship practices the need for a *paideia*<sup>2</sup>. Here *paideia* is understood as "training and set of skills, cognitive, artistic, physical, that the young citizen should have to respond and participate, fully entitled and with discretion, in the community to which he belongs (Leão, Ferreira & Fialho, 2010, p.7).

Over time, the concept of citizenship has been configured through multiple and diverse ideologies that have characterized the evolution of democratic societies (McLaughlin, 1992; Kerr, 1999; Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Kennedy, 2019), with constant transformations, in permanent political and social conflict (Banks, 2004; Heater, 2004).

In a historical analysis of its development in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, carried out by the sociologist Marshall in the 1950s, who proposes a tripartite model: civil, political, and social. Firstly, the civil element, the individual with the right to freedom and justice; secondly the political element, in preference to the political and public interests of a state, where the individualist system is valued in opposition to a system of association and; finally, the social element, subject to the political-economic interests established in democratic societies since the era of industrialization (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992). From classical times to the 18th century, before the industrial revolution, ideologies were based on an aristocratic vision. In opposition to this political and social organization, alongside the ideals of the Enlightenment and with the industrial revolution in the 18th century, a vision of an egalitarian society emerged, centered on rational autonomy and individual freedom. However, the emphasis on individualism and the primacy of the growth of economic societies deteriorates the social and relational aspects of the individual, in favor of assimilationist characteristics and intolerance, leading to the regression of the understanding of the common well-being of current democratic societies (Sacristán, 2003).

To understand the concept of citizenship and its multiple dimensions is to understand them inseparable from the notions attributed to the meaning of democracy<sup>3</sup>. Here it becomes necessary to clarify what we mean by 'democracy' because in investigating its meaning, "we find that it has been and still is understood in several different ways, which may have a common core or root, but are not identical" (Arblaster, 2002, p.6). It is important to reflect and question the legitimacy of the term when also applied to a whole society (Carr, 1998; Arblaster, 2002). Especially, when we are witnessing disbelief of values, decrease in social rights, resulting in increased distrust and disinterest in the model of the current political regime, democracy (Sacristán, 2003; Kennedy, 2019). There is also a risk of proceeding in the same way concerning the 'legitimacy' of the term citizenship because both are the product of human ideologies and constitutive institutions. Perhaps, therefore, It is important, to reflect and question whether we are not all facilitating a 'legitimacy' of the term 'citizenship' when in reality its exercise is more complex and requires constant critical reflection on it? (Sacristán, 2003, p. 190).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Leão, Ferreira & Fialho, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> The etymological meaning of the word 'democracy', is composed of two elements, *demos* meaning 'people' and the word *kratos* meaning 'government'. Therefore, in the immediate sense, democracy means a state 'governed by the people'. In practice, what happens is that the government of such a State is constituted by representatives of the people; an election through which the people choose who will govern them (Cf. Arblaster, 2002, p.15).

In its practice, citizenship implies an awareness that everyone has the right to education, to exchange and share ideas equally, to freedom of expression, to respect as an individual and respect for the other, in their divergence, discussion, and criticism, for a conscious growth of self and the other, stimulating a formation for a culture of individual and social responsibility. Citizenship should be understood through "our connections to particular social and cultural sites, [and] the possibility of a participatory involvement in the formation of our society and our understanding of our rights and responsibilities" (Stevenson, 2011, p.5), intervening actively and critically, in the construction of individual and social identity, inherent in the context of human rights. Education should cultivate learning to reflect, discuss and create critical thinking about the dimensions that constitute this broad concept and its practices (Freire, 1967; Martins, 2006; Dewey, 2007); with evidence for the realization of artistic activities, based on dialogue and sharing of experiences that allow exploring and experiencing other perspectives, thinking and transmitting their ideas through artistic manifestations; in addition to promoting greater integration and involvement by individuals enabling new possibilities for "social transformation" (Eça, 2010; Kuttner, 2015; Ramirez, 2016; Reis, 2020).

## The social and relational role of citizenship education

In the last decades of the 20th century, transformations in societies have given rise to new realities, which challenge 'education for citizenship' that recognizes interculturality and interconnects it in a dialogical and relational way (Sacristán, 2003; Banks, 2004). Given the difficulties in a clear and elaborate concept of this concept in educational programs, motivated by the differences existing in each nation, It is necessary to discuss and reflect on the theory and *praxis* for its exercise and, establish a balance between social and cultural diversity (McLaughlin, 1992). The authors Freire (1970) and Dewey (2007) also advocate a continuous dialectical process between practice and theory for an effective transformation to occur in societies.

It becomes emergent to question and understand what society we want if It is a society that favors an education for passivity, whose norms the citizen accepts in a continuous system of "reproduction" and affirmation of the *status quo*? Or, a society that attributes to each citizen an active and responsible role as a member of it, acting on it, in a system of "transformation"?

We advocate an education with a leading role in the construction of citizens who question, interconnect with the people around them and the environment, actively and responsibly. We understand citizens here as individual, social, and cultural subjects with the ability to relate to others and intervene in decisions that concern collective well-being (Sacristán, 2003; Freire & Caetano, 2014; Freire, 1967). The idea also underlined by Dewey when he states that education should provide "a development of the innate aptitudes of individuals capable of participating and acting freely in experiences shared with

others" (2007, p.117) to achieve "greater social efficiency"<sup>4</sup>. In this socialization capacity, sharing experiences and reflecting on them, the "aptitude to produce and appreciate art, the capacity for recreation and the meaningful use of leisure are more important elements of social efficiency than the conventional elements often associated with citizenship" (Dewey, 2007, p.115).

From this perspective, artistic practices provide reflective experiences within the individual surroundings, which summon sensitivity, emotion, and aesthetics. As well as individual ways of seeing, feeling, reflecting, and creating (Eça, 2010; Kuttner, 2015). Thus, in the relationship that man establishes with the world, Freire underlines man's singularity, recognizing in it an underlying plurality that exists in man's way of proceeding and thinking. This existence is nourished by man's capacity to "transcend, discern, dialogue (communicate and participate)", where "existence is individual, yet It is only realized with other existing" (1967, p. 40).

In these relationships, students and teachers have the opportunity to produce knowledge with the ability to transform human understanding. In this sense, the teacher occupies a central role, as he or she has the responsibility to encourage, promote and create the appropriate space for collaboration to occur and, therefore, the construction of knowledge, through processes of negotiation and mediation, which Sullivan calls "trans-cognition", that is, each factor has a role in the construction of meaning, which cannot be understood separately from its context (Sullivan, 2007, p. 1184). It is precisely in this space, in the learning communities, that reflection and intervention with others take place, discovering in social relationships that these establish mediation in the process of cultural appropriation, guaranteed by engagement in learning, interconnected to the well-being of all (Bandura, 2000; Burnard & Dragovic, 2015; Branco, 2018). Branco (2018) underlines the importance of the relationships between students and teachers, stating that the way teachers expose practices to students is fundamental to a mutual understanding, in the creation of affectivities. Many of the values and beliefs that are carried into the learning environment can establish a positive connection with students or, on the contrary, cause obstacles to their active participation. We do not advocate an environment where students feel limited in their activities, afraid to communicate their ideas and induced to reproduce discourses that correspond to educational systems where the teacher presents content and students are mere receivers, because in these circumstances learning is reduced to a closed circuit in itself. It is necessary to understand and listen to students about their learning, opinions about the way they acquire knowledge (Kinchin, 2004), and stimulate students' creativity (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2013; Alencar, 2007; Alencar, 2004; Oliveira & Alencar, 2012). School should be understood as a privileged space for the participatory involvement of all the intervening parties. In the fruition of experiences that it integrates, correlates, and provides to the students, in the reflection and responsible and critical intervention in their experiences, towards education for autonomy and freedom as a process for the "critical awareness" of the individual, involved in the world around him (Freire, 1970).

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<sup>4</sup> This author understands "social efficiency" as the "capacity to share the giving and receiving of experience. It embraces everything that makes the individual's experience more valuable to others and that enables him to participate with greater value in the experiences of others" (Cf. Dewey, 2007, p. 115).

In this context, through artistic practices, based on dialogue and social sharing, students discuss and reflect on socio-cultural problems and concerns, acquiring critical thinking and contributing to rethink issues inherent to citizenship and ways to put them into practice, with equality, freedom, solidarity, etc. (Kuttner, 2015; Reis, 2020). Moreover, through these apprenticeships in a social coexistence of equality and with respect for difference, in the expansion of their cultural and artistic knowledge, the individual with their creativity and freedom of expression elaborates a "critical consciousness" with a greater appreciation of democracy (Eça, 2010; Caetano, Freire & Machado, 2020; Ramirez, 2016).

## Considerations for an education for a culture of citizenship

Citizenship is built-in everyday life, in relationships between individuals, and in the way of being in front of the situations that emerge. Social coexistence involves getting to know the other, listening to the other, even if opinions differ. Through dialogue and sharing different perspectives, socialization takes place, reflection, action and change occur. In this sense, it is important to know the ideologies of the society where we are inserted, its existing political, social, and cultural models; not to follow the models in a watertight way, but to discuss and reflect on them to modify them, for an improvement in the valorization of social relationships, their human rights, respect for social and cultural differentiation, in the encouragement of a more egalitarian and tolerant society. Therefore, the conception of education "as a process and a social function has no exact meaning until we define the kind of society we have in mind" (Dewey, 2007, p.95). For this reason, it is necessary to understand what we mean by the concept of citizenship. To reflect and integrate its multiple dimensions, to realize how to increase the possibility of dialogue, trust, and solidarity, in the creation of democratic societies, recognizing its greater immanent complexity.

Educators, philosophers, and researchers recognize the importance of existing educational models as a contribution to reflection and construction of new curricular guidelines, according to a *continuum* for an active and transforming citizenship (Sacristán, 2003; Nogueira, 2015). It is essential to continue thinking and discussing the existing educational practices because it is through their implementation and reflection that changes are observed. In this constant process of reformulation involving individuals, their forms of socialization, constructing with others, the making process is shaped, and the learning consolidated. Underline the role of artistic practices as essential to the coexistence of social sharing that, through individual interpellations, stimulates dialogue between the collective, the confrontation of ideas, contributing to the construction of the identity of individuals and their society. In the current observation of the deterioration of social rights in favor of neoliberal economic policies that mark an idealization of citizenship, but not the actual realization (Sacristán, 2003), it seems to be expectable that the interconnections between citizenship, culture, and art education project new possibilities of reconnection to improve democratic societies (Caetano & Freire, 2014; Kuttner, 2015; Ramirez, 2016; Enslin & Ramirez-Hurtado, 2013). The education proposals present challenges in training



individuals for a culture of citizenship inherent in the context of human rights; recognizing the importance of equating artistic and creative practices in promoting learning that enables the creation of multiple forms of artistic expression that reflect these issues, alerting society about violations of these rights. In this transformative perspective, it is essential to develop students' interest in social and political issues (Shor, 2004), to promote pedagogies with a central emphasis on dialogue, debate, and exchange of divergent ideas, whose communication is formulated in interactions between peers, in continuous respect and encouragement of freedom and autonomy of individuals (Freire, 1967). The role of arts and art education practices constitute a form of social and cultural production, through which artistic manifestations can achieve something with meanings and connotations that go beyond the individual who creates and produces them, especially for others, for the community (Enslin & Ramirez-Hurtado, 2013; Caetano & Freire, 2014). Here, artistic practices also understood as a "process of development of young people's orientations towards the arts as a form of cultural production" (Kuttner, 2015, p. 70), in addition to allowing the development of creative skills and artistic expression, allows transforming the individual into a communicational agent, in the social and cultural sphere, in the community where they are inserted (Ramirez, 2016; Caetano, Freire & Machado, 2020). Within this perception, education should not be considered as a development process with an end goal that subordinates individuals to an educational effort that ensures political standards and economic conditions established in current societies (neoliberal); i.e., "dominated by the acceptance of the *status quo*"; but, that provides development of individuals' natural capacities, decision-making in the face of participation and involvement in shared experiences with others, with integration and correlation between different areas of knowledge, for an improvement and transformation of societies (Eça, 2010). As Caetano, Freire, and Machado state, when

We change the world by changing ourselves, and we change ourselves by changing the world. Democracy, justice, and freedom are the agenda in which we are actors and co-authors of transformation processes" (Caetano, Freire & Machado, 2020, p.70).

The way we socialize with others defines our practice of citizenship, the awareness that we affect others, and our sensitivity to let ourselves be affected, in contact with divergent views, cultures, and ways of being and being in the world. The question is how we visualize ourselves: as beings of stagnation or beings of integration? Because the permission to extend ourselves, to unfold ourselves together with others should be free and autonomous, on a learning path that enables us to experience, live, reflect and choose; in opposition, there is discrimination, subjugation, and intolerance.

## Conclusions

In contemporary democratic societies, there is a displacement of the central process, the human being. The organization of societies should not be according to the economy, but the economy should be organized according to social needs. The essence is socialization with others, based on experiences where dialogical understanding helps to

break down barriers of social and cultural differentiation; promotes empathy, solidarity, and tolerance for difference, active and interested participation; feelings that cultivate the common welfare. In this vision, education should be based on a pedagogy of alterity in the training of individuals that enables us to see ourselves as beings who relate to others, in the construction of our identity, and, as such, recognize the importance of the other, of tolerance and interculturality. It argues for an education-oriented towards "transformative" citizenship, in the defense of individual rights alongside social and community development, whose artistic practices enable individuals to achieve something meaningful, in a commitment to production directed especially to others, to society. Learning should be a stimulus for dialogue, cooperation, and active involvement of its participants, challenging them to emancipation, integration, and social interaction and also encourage them to question and participate critically and reflectively in the communities where they live. The school environment should provide relationships of trust, belonging, and solidarity, in the creation of collective well-being, in the realization of activities with freedom of choice, flexibility, and experimentation to increase students' participation, involvement, and commitment in the realization of artistic practices. Creative freedom embodied in freedom of expression happens when students are given support in their decision-making. In this context, the role of teachers is essential because it is through mediated communication between students and teachers that learning takes place. However, to do so, be aware that the beliefs and values applied in educational strategies should promote dynamics based on dialogue. These dynamics associated with affective quality in social interactions and relationships, in the integration of activities oriented to the development of cognitive, affective, and emotional capacities of students, enhance creative practices along with their training for a culture of citizenship, of caring for oneself and for the other, where each one matters, for their singularities and differences, in the constitution of the collective. To make students aware of and encourage them to develop an interest in the issues that surround them, social, political, ethical, etc. and establish a constant reflection and discussion about the theory and practices developed, as well as stimulate participation in wider and open discussions, about political, economic, social and cultural ideologies of democratic societies reflected in educational systems, is fundamental in the search for conditions that promote the freedom of all its citizens; not in the sense of showing what kind of education builds a 'good society' (always something debatable); but in the sense that education enables and encourages citizens to participate in reflections and debates that enable the transformation of societies. All individuals are reflections of the communities and societies they are part of, and we are all partly the result of our environments; but also, through our interactions and choices, we create and change the world; therefore, we are producers of our environments.

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