



ISSN: 2230-9926

Available online at <http://www.journalijdr.com>

IJDR

International Journal of Development Research
Vol. 08, Issue, 04, pp.20174-20178, April, 2018



ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS

INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: DIFFUSION OF DEMOCRACY IN EDUCATION

***Iman Ali Ahmed Al-Rashed**

Department of Translation, College of Arts, University of Basra, Iraq

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 22nd January, 2018
Received in revised form
26th February, 2018
Accepted 20th March, 2018
Published online 30th April, 2018

Key Words:

Democracy, Education,
Equality, diversity, participation,
Choice, cohesion, case study.

ABSTRACT

The present study is a focus on the importance of democracy in education. The paper discusses the need for utilizing democracy in the educational practices. The study is a qualitative case study. Data were collected using interviews, classrooms observations and fieldnotes. The present study examines the conceptions of three participants, university lecturers who were chosen from three faculties, on the role of democracy in education. Additionally, the paper presents the impact of the lecturers' conceptions on their practices in classrooms. In accordance with the obtained data, it was observed that there is a limited knowledge on understanding the role of democracy in education. This was clearly manifested in the classroom practices.

Copyright © 2018, Iman Ali Ahmed Al-Rashed. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Citation: Iman Ali Ahmed Al-Rashed, 2018. "Innovation in higher education: diffusion of democracy in education", *International Journal of Development Research*, 8, (04), 20174-20178.

INTRODUCTION

The word "democracy" is derived from the Greek word "demos" or "people"; it can be defined as "government in which the supreme power is vested in people" (Ravitch and Viteritti 2001:34). In some societies, people directly practice democracy; in big societies, democracy is applied by people's elected agents. The word "democracy" is a well-known word. However, this concept is misunderstood and misused by dictators, single-party regimes and military leaders who claim the implementation of democracy. Despite the fact that the two terms "freedom" and "democracy" are used interchangeably, they are not synonymous. Democracy is considered a series of ideas and principles concerning freedom (ibid; Grigsby 2005; Gurr 1980; Sondra 1998). Additionally, it includes all the practices and procedures that have been used during a long history. Democracy relies upon literate knowledgeable citizens who have access to information; thus, they are able to involve in the public life of their society and able to criticize any unwise or oppressive policy by their government. The elected representatives of the citizens depend mainly on uncensored idea, data and opinions.

***Corresponding author:** Iman Ali Ahmed Al-Rashed,
Department of Translation, College of Arts, University of Basra, Iraq.

Moreover, citizens are able to practice free speech; they are openly and publicly able to express themselves in speech and writing. However, this puts democracy under a big challenge in which the government must create balance between freedom of speech and countering speech that encourage violence. The core of the democratic action is based on peaceful, active participation of citizens. Democracy is considered a process; it is a system of living and working collaboratively. This system demands a set of actions that includes cooperation, compromise and tolerance. Democracy is an approach of believing that all people despite their differences are equal in rights (Green and Luehrmann 2004; Weiner 1967; Nyerere 1967; Mail 1992).

Research Questions

- What are the teachers' conceptions on - the role of - democracy in education?
- What is the impact of the teachers' conceptions on their practices in classrooms?

Literature Review

Understanding Education

Education is considered a fundamental element in any democratic society. There is an explicit relationship between

education and democratic values. The educational principles foster all democratic practices in any democratic society. Any positive social and political change lies in the hands of its educational citizens. The educational system must not be considered as a means of teaching students by a democratic government; all resources must be merely devoted to education. Knowing and fully understanding democracy starts in schools. Through different stages of education, people will realize the social and political arrangements and ultimately the true meaning of freedom (Ravitch and Viteritti 2001; Alexander 1995; 2003). Life is a continuous process; it is a "self-renewing process". While physiological life is a continuous through nutrition and reproduction, social life is continuous through education. The transmission of communication is done in education. This communication is a system of sharing experiences. The necessity of formal teaching and learning increases with the complexity of societies whether in structure or resources. This proves that education is a necessity of life. The word "education" refers to a process of leading or bringing up. There is a direct outcome of this process in the mind. Hence, education is considered a shaping, forming and molding activity. Education can be defined technically as a reconstruction or reorganization of experience. It has a direct effect (impact) on all stages of life. This is because it can direct the path of all the subsequent experiences (Dewey 1930; Thomas 2013; Montessori 2000).

Education and Democracy

Democracy represents a comprehensive view; it must be considered an associated mode of living rather than merely a view of political democracy. It must be strived for on all aspects of life; political, economic, educational, scientific, artistic, religious and familial institutions. Any democratic model in any society must be established in a literate and engaged citizens (Bacon 2010). Literacy is considered a basic principal in building a democratic society. This democratic education can be reached by doing the following steps. Firstly, the education system must not provide only education for all citizens but take the serious efforts to give high level of education. Secondly, educational system must give the power of freedom in selection and accomplishing their life projects; this will promote the growth of their individuality. Thirdly, any educational system that seeks to reaching a democratic level must expand the students' interests. The barriers between classes and creating a wide scope of interests must be broken to cover history, sciences, painting, music and literature (Chomsky 2000; Lambert 1998; Burnham 2004). Dewey (1938) states a fundamental distinction between schooling and education. Schooling in itself does not lead to a democratic education. Schooling gives economic and vocational influence in the society. In his theory, Foucault (1995) stresses that the society includes highly complicated forms of impediment that detain all kind of enforcement for the people in the society. In this circular detainment, the school's mission is to assist in amending this track. Hence, all the educational institutions target in all the teaching and learning practices must be to create a new freedom space, making it totally different from all the confinement centers in the society.

Conceptual Framework

The framework is based five main concepts of democratic theory in education that were proposed by Perry (2009). The five concepts are equality, diversity, participation, choice and

cohesion. This framework is an educational policy that must be followed to create a democratic education. Perry (ibid) considers these five concepts a criteria for designing, analyzing, evaluation and comparing different education policies. The first concept is equality; it is considered significant in maintaining that the social mobility is dynamic. It refers to the educational policy in giving all people equal opportunities to study and equal outcome in the educational process in teaching and evaluation. Additionally, on the micro-level the concept of equality is a critical criterion. Regardless of the student' nationality, gender and religion, they must be treated equally by their teachers. This must be manifested in students' relations, the status of the teacher and the status of the students. Equality must also be apparent in the must be given all students equally (Dewey 1938; McAninch 1999; Hansen, 2002; Sorensen, 1996). The second concept is diversity; it is an important concept as many societies confront the immigration issue. This concept refers to variations in opinions, lifestyles and modes of thinking. This can be seen in the students' various interests and academic characteristics. The concept of diversity can also be seen in the educational policy as it provides diverse educational services. In the educational micro-level, diversity can be seen in the students' diverse cultural backgrounds, different academic needs, and different personal interests. This diversity must be fostered by the teachers in class to consider all opinions and avoid treating different opinions outsiders and show respect for all views. Diversity provides academic richness and intensifies the academic standards. Teachers must be trained to reach this level of considering diversity in their teaching (Schultz 2007; Perry 2009; Kymlicka, 1995; Strong Boag, 1996; Giroux and McLaren 1986). The third concept is participation.

This concept can be seen in the educational policy in the involvement of stakeholders, teachers, parents and students in the funding and formation of education. Additionally, participation can be seen in the establishment of various unions and councils of teachers, students and parents in which they can present their opinions without any discrimination. In classroom setting, participation is critical since it is connected with the educational decision making methodology and the students' self-determination process. This can be seen clearly in the students' evaluation of the teaching process which aid teachers in amending the pedagogical methodology. This concept of participation can lead students to reach the level of active learning rather than passively receiving and saving knowledge (Poduska, 1996; Ladson-Billings 1998; Davies 2006; Sorensen 1996; Levin 1998). The fourth concept is choice; this concept refers to the students' right to choose the topics and subjects that interest them. This will lead them to have the freedom in expressing their own opinions. Additionally, students will respect their preferences and have self-determination in their life in the future (Bennis 2006; Hern 1996; Dennison 1969; Illich 1971; Mercogliano 1998; Holt 1972). The last concept is cohesion which is connected with solidarity and trust in the society. It creates strong bonds among the society's members. In the educational system, there are various programs that create cohesion among students, future citizens and minorities. In classrooms, the concept of cohesion must be practiced by teachers by giving the students the opportunity in participating, trusting each other and working for a goal. This means that students must accept their differences and accept each other (McAninch 1999; Osler and Starkey 2005; Potter 2002; Giroux and McLaren 1986; Perry 2009).

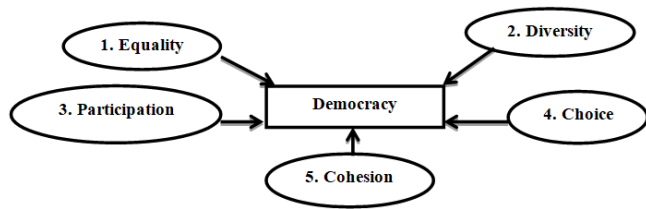


Diagram 1. Main Characteristics of Democracy

Qualitative Case Study

This study is a qualitative case study. Qualitative studies are concerned with fieldwork in which the researcher meets people in the site to make observation and records behaviors in the actual setting (Ragin 1997; Yin 2014). Because human behavior is influenced by the actual setting, the researcher must conduct the study in real situations to make observations especially in education (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Gulsecen and Kubal 2006). The procedures of a qualitative research is inductive that enables the researcher to make concepts, abstractions and hypotheses from the gained details. Thus, the primary instrument is the researcher to make the data collection and finalizing the analysis; all these steps are done by the researcher without using questionnaires or machines. In this study, the data was collected from multiple sources: interviews, direct observations and documentation. To understand the teachers' understanding of democracy and its role in education, several interviews were conducted. For comprehending the impact of the teachers' conceptions on their teaching practices, field observations and field notes were used in this study.

Participants

Three participants were used in this study; lecturers from the university of Basra-Iraq. They were chosen randomly from different faculties. To avoid mentioning their real names, pseudonyms were used in the study. All the permissions were taken before starting the study. The full information of the participants and their background is mentioned in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' background information

| Name | Field | Level of Education | Graduation Faculty |
|-------|-----------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Fiona | English | Doctorate degree (PhD) | Faculty of Arts |
| Karl | Geography | Doctorate degree (PhD) | Faculty of Education |
| Anna | Biology | Doctorate degree (PhD) | Faculty of Science |

To assess the lecturers' perception on democracy in education, the first research question: "What are the teachers' conceptions on - the role of -democracy in education?"- was divided into two sub-questions: i. What is your perception of the word "democracy" in other words "what comes to your mind when the word "democracy" is mentioned? For Anna, "I directly think about having many political parties and that I am free according to my beliefs to join any party". While Karl commented, "Well, I believe that this word "democracy" means that people are equal to one another. All citizens are treated equally and fairly by the government". Fiona's understanding was different: "for me democracy means safety.

It is to be safe from any violence and any crime by the government or any party". ii. What is your understanding of the main characteristics of democracy in education? For the second sub-question, the lecturers Anna and Fiona mentioned, "I think it refers to providing the basic needs and necessities of life". Karl said, "I believe that the main characteristics of democracy are connected with regular elections". Through the collected data by using interviews, observations and field notes, I noticed that there is a lack of understanding the meaning of democracy in education; poor information inhibits teachers' implementation of democracy in their classrooms.

DISCUSSION

In the light of the results, it is clear that there is a lack of understanding the meaning of democracy in education. The focus of the educational program is on the content courses and on evaluation. Teachers have limited knowledge on the role of democracy in education because they concentrate on the content courses. This point is consistent with what was mentioned by Dewey (1927) in his stress on the significant link between education and democracy; education will have positive effects on the whole society by making visible link with democracy. Dewey (ibid: 5) states that education in democracy "represents a broadly based and lifelong embrace of learning". Many scholars confirm the powerful effect of the whole educational system in connection with increasing the teachers' knowledge (Cochran-Smith, 2006; Hansen, 2008; Sockett, 2008; Hatano and Oura, 2003; Williamson McDiarmid and Clevenger-Bright, 2008; Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005; Hagger and McIntyre, 2006). The educational system must seek to uncover knowledge that could be critical in the development of the educational process; the criteria must be to equip teachers with interdisciplinary knowledge. This will transform the overall orientation of education as new genres will emerge in which more systematic attention is given to understanding the importance of democracy in education. Additionally, the results showed lack of understanding the main characteristics of democracy in education. The treatment must be considered under two headings: student teaching and teacher teaching. The former should include applying all the components of democracy in education; this can be done by considering it the basis of successful teaching, exploring new paths and developing a different approach in application. This finding is congruous with numerous researchers who understood the importance of reshaping the students' understanding of democracy (Munck, 2014; Behrouzi 2005; Cohen, 2002; Davies and Lundholm, 2011). The latter should include an approach that can familiarize teachers with the main characteristics of democracy in education. This approach cannot be effective without having sufficient background information concerning democracy. What can make this approach unique is to introduce teachers to democracy through a series of training strategies to hone their understanding on democracy in education. This point is in agreement with what was emphasized by many researchers who stressed that the teachers' broad knowledge on democracy can help students to realize democracy from different perspectives and demonstrate this understanding in their actual learning sitting- in classrooms (Shulman, 1995; Stengel, 1997; Eriksen and Lund, 2016). Teachers will be able to understand what is involved in becoming democratic in classrooms. Furthermore, they will be able to discuss and apply the principles of democracy which involves participation and equity issues in classrooms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is significant to look at democracy from different lenses. Regardless of being a familiar concept for all people, this concept must be implemented as part of all pupils' education. It cannot be sufficient to develop standards and teaching methods as the educational systems is not implementing the concept of democracy in education. The first step in this implementation is training teachers by using special educational programs concerning democracy; this can enrich teachers to alter their instruction methods. Higher education institutions must play a strong role in disseminating democracy in education. This step will significantly change the educational culture.

REFERENCES

- Alexander, R. J. 1995. *Versions of Primary Education*. London: Routledge.
- Alexander, R. J. 2003. *Talk for Learning: The First Year*. Northallerton: North Yorkshire County. ASCD.
- Bacon and Barbara J. Thayer. 2010. *Education's Role in Democracy: The Power of Pluralism. Ethics and Politics*, XII, 1, pp. 134-156.
- Behrouzi, M. 2005. *Democracy as the political empowerment of the people: The betrayal of an ideal*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Bennis, D. M. 2006. "De-Mystifying Freedom-based Education." Master's thesis, Vermont College of Union Institute and University.
- Burnham and John West. 2004. *Building Leadership Capacity- Helping Leaders Learn*. Scotland: HMSO and the Queen's Printer.
- Chomsky, N. 2000. *Chomsky on Miseducation Maryland, USA: Rowman and*
- Cochran-Smith, M. 2006. *Policy, Practice, and Politics in Teacher Education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Cohen, J. 2002. Deliberation and democratic legitimacy. In D. Estlund (Ed.), *Democracy* (pp. 8–106). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Darling-Hammond, L. and Bransford, J. (Eds.) 2005. *Preparing teachers for a changing world*. Report of the Committee on Teacher Education of the National Academy of Education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Davies, L. 2006. Global citizenship: Abstraction or framework for action? *Educational Review*, 58, 5-25.
- Davies, P. and Lundholm, C. 2011. Students' understanding of socio-economic phenomena: Conceptions about the free provision of goods and services. *Journal of Economic Psychology: Research in Economic Psychology and Behavioral Economics*, 33(1), 79–89. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167487011001218>.
- Dennison, G. 1969. *The Lives of Children: The Story of the First Street School*. New York: Random House.
- Dewey, J. 1927. *The public and its problems*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Dewey, J. 1930. *Democracy and Education*. New York: THE Macmillan Company.
- Dewey, J. 1938. *Experience and Education*. New York, NY: Kappa Delta Phi.
- Eriksen, T. M. and Lund, A. 2016. Teacher education as transformation: Some lessons learned from a centre of excellence in education. *Acta Didactica Norge*
- Foucault, M. 1995. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Giroux, H. A. and McLaren, P. 1986. Teacher education and politics of engagement: The case for democratic schooling. *Harvard Educational Review*, 56, 213-238).
- Green and Luehrmann, 2004, *Comparative Politics of the Third World: Linking Concepts and Cases*.
- Grigsby, E. 2005, *Analyzing Politics: An Introduction to Political Science*, Belmont: Thomson Learning Inc.
- Gulsecen, S. and Kubat, A. 2006. Teaching ICT to teacher candidates using PBL: A qualitative and quantitative evaluation. *Educational Technology and Society*, 9(2): 96-106.
- Gurr, T.R., ed., 1980, *Handbook of Political Conflict*, New York: Free Press.
- Hagger, H. and McIntyre, D. 2006. *Learning teaching from teachers. Realizing the potential of school-based teacher education*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Hansen, D. T. 2002. Dewey's conception of an environment for teaching and learning. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 32, 267-280.
- Hansen, D.T. 2008. Values and purpose in teacher education. In Cochran-Smith, M., Feiman-Nemser, S., McIntyre, D. (Eds.). *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education. Enduring questions in changing contexts*. New York/Abingdon: Routledge/Taylor and Francis.
- Hatano, G. and Oura, Y. 2003. Commentary: reconceptualising school learning using insight from expertise research. *Educational Researcher*, 32(8), 26-29.
- Hern, M., ed. 1996. *Deschooling Our Lives*. Gabriola Island, B.C. New Society Publishers.
- Holt, J. 1972. *Freedom and Beyond*. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co.
- <http://epx.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/23/3/423> [accessed 28 September 2009].
- Illich, I. 1971. *Deschooling Society*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Kymlicka, W. 1995. Multicultural citizenship. In G. Shafir's (Ed.), *The citizenship debates* (pp. 167-188). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ladson-Billings, G. 1998. Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11, 7-24.
- Lambert, L. 1998. *Building Leadership Capacity in Schools* Alexandria, VA. USA:
- Levin, B. 1998. The educational requirement for democracy. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 28, 58-78.
- Lincoln, Y. and Guba, E. 1985. *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Beverly Hills: Sage Publishing.
- Littlefield Publishers, INC.
- Mail, H. 1992, *The Peace Makers: Peaceful Settlement of Dispute Since 1945*, London: Macmillan.
- McAninch, A. 1999. More or less acceptable case analyses: A pragmatist approach. In R.F. McNergney, E.R. Ducharme, and M. K. Ducharme (Eds.), *Educating for democracy: Case-method teaching and learning* (pp. 61-78). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Mercogliano, C. 1998. *Making it Up as We Go Along: The Story of the Albany Free School*. Portsmouth, N. H.: Heinemann.
- Montessori, M. 2000. *To Educate the Human Potential*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Munck, G. 2014. What is democracy? A reconceptualization of the quality of democracy. *Democratization*, 1–26.

- Retrieved from <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13510347.2014.918104>.
- Nyerere, J. 1967, *Freedom and Unity*, London: Oxford University Press.
- Perry, L. 2009. "Conceptualizing education policy on democratic societies" *Education Policy*, Vol.23, no3, 423-450.
- Poduska, K. 1996. To give my students wings. In L. E. Beyer's (Ed.) *Creating democratic classrooms: The struggle to integrate theory and practice* (pp.106-126). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Ragin and Charles C. 1997. "Turning the Tables: How Case-Oriented Research Challenges Variable-Oriented Research." *Comparative Social Research* 16:27-42.
- Ravitch, D. and Viteritti, J. 2001. *Making Good Citizens: Education and Civil Society*. New Haven: London, Yale University Press.
- Schultz, B. D. 2007. Problematizing race: Complicating good liberal intentions. In S. Leafgren, B. D. Schultz, M. P. O'Malley, L. A. M. Johnson, J. F. Brady, and A. M. Dentith's (Eds.), *The articulation of curriculum and pedagogy for a just society: Advocacy, artistry, and activism* (pp. 93-106). New York: Educator's International Press, Inc.
- Shulman, L. S. 1995. *To see it is to psychologize it*. Paper presented as The John Dewey Lecture at the annual meeting of the John Dewey Society and the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.
- Sockett, H. 2008. The moral and epistemic purposes of teacher education. In Cochran-Smith, M., Feiman- Nemser, S., Mc Intyre, D. (Eds.). *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education. Enduring questions in changing contexts*. New York/Abingdon: Routledge/ Taylor and Francis.
- Sondra, M. 1998. U.S. Department of State, *Democracy is a Discussion II: The Challenges and Promise of a New Democratic Era*. A joint publication of the U.S. Department and Connecticut College.
- Sorensen, K. 1996. Creating a democratic classroom: Empowering students within and outside school walls. In L. E. Beyer's (Ed.) *Creating democratic classrooms: The struggle to integrate theory and practice* (pp. 87-105). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Stengel, B. 1997. "Academic discipline" and "school subject": Contestable curricular concepts. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 29(5), 585-602. Retrieved from <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/002202797183928>.
- Strong-Boag, V. 1996. Claiming a place in the nation: Citizenship education and the challenge of feminists, natives, and workers in post-confederation Canada. *Canadian and International Education*, 25, 128-145.
- Thomas, G. 2013. *Education: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Weiner, M. 1967. *Party Building in a New Nation*, Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Williamson McDiarmid, G. and Clevenger-Bright, M. 2008. Rethinking Teacher Capacity. In Cochran-Smith, M., Feiman-Nemser, S. and Mc Intyre, D. (Eds). *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education. Enduring questions in changing contexts*. New York/Abingdon: Routledge/Taylor and Francis.
- Yin, Robert K. 2014. *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
