



A comparative study of democratic and autocratic education in the context of sociological perspectives

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Abstract

In this paper it is mainly focused that the comparison between the democratic method of education to the autocratic method of education in the social settings. Also curriculum, method of teaching, discipline, importance of social relations, social life, democratic values etc. As per the studies conducted in this area revealed that democratic method is more successful than the autocratic method of teaching in achieving quality education. It is believed that democratic way of education brings the harmony in the social relationships and brings peace in the people. The John Dewey Project on Progressive Education grounds its work in Dewey's assumption that the aims of education should be oriented towards preparing young people to be full and active participants in all aspects of democratic life. The skills and dispositions needed to actively participate in all aspects of democratic life include: the ability to think critically, a sense of efficacy, a commitment to compassionate action, and a desire to actively participate in political life by engaging in local decision-making processes, lobbying, voting, etc.

Keywords: social relationship, quality education, curriculum, democratic and autocratic values

Introduction

Democratic education is an educational ideal in which democracy is both a goal and a method of instruction. It brings democratic values to education and can include self-determination within a community of equals, as well as such values as justice, respect and trust. Democratic education is often specifically emancipatory, with the students' voices being equal to the teacher's. Democratic education aims to develop real democracy through active participation by all those involved in classrooms and educational institutions. In democratic education students have the power to make decisions about their learning, because power is shared rather than appropriated in advance by a minority of people. Education, in its various forms, is basically authoritarian, since one person, or small groups of people make decisions about 'what to learn, when to learn, how to learn, how to assess learning, and the nature of the learning environment'. Furthermore such decisions are taken in course planning committees and accreditation boards often before the students have even enrolled on a course or met together as a group. Autocratic describes a way of ruling, but not in a nice way. An *autocratic* leader is one who rules with an iron fist; in other words - someone with the behavior of a dictator. The ruling class or the party is not in any way responsible to the people. Dictatorship is the government of one who possess absolute sovereignty. Some of the characteristics autocratic system are - one party rule, no constitutional methods of changing the government, no communication between the people and government etc. In reviewing the research literature on education for democratic participation and social and civic responsibility, L.H. Ehman (1980, 113) reports, The findings from this review suggest that the manifest curriculum (i.e., direct instruction involving courses and texts in civics, government, and other social studies courses) is not as

important as the latent curriculum in influencing political attitudes. This latent curriculum includes how classes are taught, not the subject matter itself. This classroom climate is directly manipulate by teachers and represents a potentially important level in the political education of youth. The entire school governance climate, which is another aspect of the latent curriculum, is another consistent correlate of student political attitudes.

Values and Principles of autocracy and democracy

The autocratic approach: When using this approach, the leader takes most decisions without consulting others and taking most of the decisions by him or herself (at least for the most part). An autocratic approach works when there is little or no need for input on the decision, where the decision would not change as a result of input, and/or where the motivation of people to carry out subsequent actions would not be affected, whether they were or were not involved in the decision-making.

The democratic approach: When using the democratic approach (sometimes also called a consultative or participative approach), the leader involves people in discussions and final decision-making. People usually appreciate being consulted, especially if they have been used to more autocratic decisions with which they disagreed in the past. However, this approach can be problematic when there are a wide range of opinions and there is no clear way of reaching consensus or when there is a lot of time pressure.

Democracy Vs Autocracy

- Decisions should reflect the will of the majority
- Government is limited in its power and must respect people's rights
- Citizens should have a voice in decision-making

- All citizens should have a sense of responsibility to other people and the community
- Citizens should have a sense of what is socially just (good/fair for society)

Elements of democracy

- Rule of Law (Magna Carta) - both the government and the governed are subject to the law
- Political Equality - everyone is equal; one person/one vote
- Common Good - decisions are made for the benefit of everyone
- Personal Freedoms/Human Dignity - fundamental freedoms (speech, religion, etc.) civil rights
- Political Freedoms - protect the right of citizens to participate in the political process
- Being informed and getting involved - democracy works best when the citizens are active and responsible.

Elements of autocracy (Authoritarianism)

Features of an autocratic government (totalitarian, fascist, communist)

- Total control of society - an attempt to dominate citizens' public and private lives
- Instills fear through mechanisms of terror - military force; police brutality; secret service
- Controls media - censorship; government propaganda
- Official political ideology - mandatory for all; dissent unacceptable/punished
- One political party - opposition parties may be deemed illegal or are ineffective
- Clearly defined internal (citizens) and external enemies
- Rule of Law does not exist
- History may be re-written to conform to government ideology; traditional ideas/ways are replaced
- A new, ideal type of person is promoted

Curriculum

We can't run our schools and classrooms like a dictatorship and then pretend to think that our students will be prepared to be active citizens participating in our democratic system. We also have to ensure that we present democracy as a system and process that is always happening by being involved in our communities and institutions. Voting every election is only one aspect of being an active democratic citizen. Part of our responsibilities as citizens is to work with others collaboratively to accomplish shared goals and dreams. Any rights or freedoms that have been granted by politicians have rarely come independent of citizens demanding them as part of a larger social movement. Democratic schools are characterized by involving students in the decision-making process that affects what and how they learn. Democratic schools have no mandatory curriculum, considering forced learning to be undemocratic. Some democratic schools officially offer voluntary courses, and many help interested students to prepare for national examinations so they gain qualifications for further study or future employment. Some democratic schools have no official offering of courses, although courses can be offered or requested by school members.

Effect on quality of education

Democracy is not for the faint of heart and it is something that must be protected by citizens of any country. Our schools must be places where students have a voice that is heard and they must be able to take action on issues that they care about. If we adults seek to limit or silence student voice in our schools and education system then we are condemning our democracy to further degradation. It's time we make the shift towards a democratic approach to education in our classrooms and schools. If we don't, our democracy and all of us will suffer for it. The type of political socialization that takes place in democratic schools is strongly related to deliberative democracy theory. Claus Offe and Ulrich Preuss, two theorists of the political culture of deliberative democracies argue that in its cultural production deliberative democracy requires "an open-ended and continuous learning process in which the roles of both 'teacher' and 'curriculum' are missing. In other words, what is to be learned is a matter that we must settle in the process of learning itself. The political culture of a deliberative democracy and its institutions, they argue, would facilitate more "dialogical forms of making one's voice heard" which would "be achieved within a framework of liberty, within which paternalism is replaced by autonomously adopted self-paternalism, and technocratic elitism by the competent and self-conscious judgment of citizens." As a curricular, administrative and social operation within schools, democratic education is essentially concerned with equipping people to make "real choices about fundamental aspects of their lives" and happens *within* and *for* democracy. It can be "a process where teachers and students work collaboratively to reconstruct curriculum to include everyone." In at least one conception, democratic education teaches students "to participate in consciously reproducing their society, and conscious social reproduction. "This role necessitates democratic education happening in a variety of settings and being taught by a variety of people, including "parents, teachers, public officials, and ordinary citizens." Because of this "democratic education begins not only with children who are to be taught but also with citizens who are to be their teachers."

Role of education in democratic society

The purpose of education in a democratic society is to instill the values of cooperation, fairness and justice into the hearts of our students. I would argue that these values are essential to maintaining and improving a functioning democracy in any country. Democracy is not for the faint of heart and it is something that must be protected by citizens of any country. Our schools must be places where students have a voice that is heard and they must be able to take action on issues that they care about. If we adults seek to limit or silence student voice in our schools and education system then we are condemning our democracy to further degradation. It's time we make the shift towards a democratic approach to education in our classrooms and schools. If we don't, our democracy and all of us will suffer for it. The purpose of education in a democratic society is to instill the values of cooperation, fairness and justice into the hearts of our students. I would argue that these values are essential to maintaining and improving a functioning democracy in any country. In Canada, our

democracy is in serious need of a shake up. We have rising inequality due to an economic system based on competition and profit, we have a Prime Minister who is acting more and more like an authoritarian dictator and we have followed pace with the United States in dismantling the public good over the last forty years.

Democratic resources and classroom

Bringing Democratic Education to your Classroom and School, What is Democratic Education and Democratic Classroom's. The first step is to see if you can figure out what would make them feel comfortable enough to speak up. But then it is important to give them activities that they can thrive in. Have students write their ideas down and pass them to you. Have students share in small groups. Have them act out the information, draw it, teach it, make a collage, write a poem, or whatever other ideas they suggest. Again, encourage these suggestions in your evaluations. Overall, make sure that you are trying to hear all voices and keep an open mind in your classroom. Never doubt the power of the student voice. By giving them the opportunity to speak and be heard at a younger age, they are exercising power and critical thinking that will allow them to discover the type of leader they are. It will encourage them to become more active members of the community and increase their self-esteem for being acknowledged for their specific strengths.

Conclusion

While it sounds like common sense for a democratic society to base its educational approach on democratic values, a great deal of research lends further support to democratic education. Studies show that educational environments engaging young people as active participants in their own learning are linked with higher student attendance and student achievement, greater creativity and conceptual learning, and increased intrinsic motivation and determination in learning. Moreover, recent brain and cognitive research points to the value of the democratic education learning environment, including key elements such as collaborative projects, age mixing, learning through active experiences, and the importance of a caring community. Yet democratic education is important not only for the benefit to the young people who experience such a learning environment. Democratic education also carries the potential for a broader societal impact, as the self-determined and caring individuals who experience democratic education will be the leaders in building a more democratic, vibrant, and just society.

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