

DELIBERATIVE PEDAGOGY AND DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION – A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract: There is no doubt that a key ingredient of a liberal democratic polity is an active, informed and involved citizenry, endorsed by democratic values and civic and political participation. Adhesion to values compatible to democracy together with active participation help construct and maintain the bond between citizens and the political system they are part of. Indeed, in democratic societies, education is thought to play an important role in socializing for citizenship and civic participation. (Dewey, 1997; Nie et al. 1996; Niemi and Junn 1998; Gutmann 1999) The vast literature, treating this issue, focuses mainly on assessing the effects of either school or classroom climate on youth civic socialization. In this context, the paper provides a synthesis of the scholarly literature on democratic education and more precisely on the effect of deliberative pedagogies on the development of youth democratic values and civic skills. The current paper is organized along important themes and concepts, starting with a rather general perspective on school as an important socializing arena for youth democratic values and civic skills, identifying both the main concerns as well as the process through which civic socialization occurs in this context. The paper continues with a more in depth analysis of the relevant literature on various types of deliberative pedagogies and their effect on students' democratic values and civic skills.

Keywords: deliberation, pedagogy, youth, democratic values, civic skills

A key ingredient of a liberal democratic polity is an active, informed and involved citizenry, endorsed by democratic values and civic and political participation. Adhesion to values compatible to democracy together with active participation help construct and maintain the bond between citizens and the political system they are part of. Democracies benefit from a diverse range of mechanisms and agents by which the process of political socialization takes place. (Greenberg, 2009) Citizens' learning about fundamental democratic institutions and procedures,

about practicing tolerance for the inherent diversity of democratic contexts, their encouragement for actual involvement in civic or political matters are challenging tasks in virtually any context. A whole range of socialization agents (families, schools, media, peer groups, political elites etc.) exert their combined influence in developing citizens' democratic values and civic skills, within an ongoing process of education for citizenship. Indeed, in democratic societies, education is thought to play an important role in socializing for citizenship and civic participation. (Dewey, 1997; Nie et al. 1996; Niemi and Junn 1998; Gutmann 1999)

The issue is even more stringent in the context of newly established democracies, as it is the case with post-communist countries. In such contexts, the rearrangement of the institutions and channels that link citizens to the state brings along a need for changes at the level of citizens' attitudes and participatory behavior. Whereas remnants of the former establishment are more likely to affect adult population - already socialized within a non-democratic context - young generations have a better chance to acquire democratic values and to learn participatory behaviors against a background yet un-altered by the experience of authoritarianism. (Howard, 2003; Sapiro, 2004)

This is particularly relevant in terms of research and potential intervention as adolescence represents an important period for the formation and internalization of participatory habits (Dawson and Prewitt, 1969; Hooghe, 2004; Campbell 2006). Although definitely placed under the umbrella of family influence, young people are heavily exposed to schools as a crucial arena of learning about their place in society. (Niemi and Junn 1998; Badescu and Radu 2009; Andolina et al. cited in Gordon and Taft 2011) With regard to youth then, schools become one of the most relevant socialization agents, that exerts its influence on the one hand through transmitting political knowledge and civic attitudes and on the other hand through encouraging participation, involvement and a critical stance on issues.

The current paper is organized along important themes and concepts, starting with a rather general perspective on school as an important socializing arena for youth democratic values and civic skills, identifying both the main concerns as well as the process through which civic socialization occurs in this context. The paper continues with a more in depth analysis of

the relevant literature on various types of deliberative pedagogies and their effect on students' democratic values and civic skills.

A. School as arena for civic and political socialization

Among the chief concerns of school socialization studies is finding whether civic participation of youth in the early years of their development as citizens results in long lasting effects. Indeed, some studies show that it is not automatically true that these attitudes and values of adolescents correlate with their attitudes as adults. (Alwin and Korsnick 1991; Hooghe and Stolle 2005) Nevertheless, another important body of literature considers early socialization as a critically important determinant of later behavior – habits, skills and attitudes affecting civic participation that are formed in the period of youth persist into adulthood. (Nie et al 1996; Campbell 2006) Moreover, Youniss et al. (1997) reveal in his study that the effects of participation in extracurricular activities, participation in community-based projects and membership in youth organizations during adolescence are visible much later at the level of adult life membership in groups, civic engagement and other forms of political behavior.

An interesting recent article, by Finkel, Horowitz, and Rojo-Mendoza (2012) examines whether civic education programs have any long-term effect in emerging democracies. They run a large-scale civic education program in Kenya just before the disputed 2007 election that sparked a wave of ethnic clashes and brought the country to the brink of civil war. The results show that the program had significant long-term effects on variables related to civic competence and engagement, with less consistent effects on democratic values. In addition, participants who were subsequently affected by violence were less likely to adopt negative beliefs about Kenya's political system and less likely to support the use of ethnic or political violence.

Still, the most difficult and conflicting concern about school as a civic socializing arena is based on the understanding of the precise process through which civic socialization occurs in this context. The vast literature treating this issue focuses mainly on assessing the effects of either school or classroom climate on youth civic socialization. In the following section we will treat these two bodies of literature separately:

a. The effects of school climate on youth development of democratic values and civic skills.

A closer analysis of the studies focusing on the role of school educational experiences in political engagement among adolescents reveals two directions of inquiry. The first examines participation in extra-curricular activities as a pathway for civic and political participation in adulthood (Beck and Jennings, 1982; Hanks, 1981; McFarland and Thomas, 2006; Verba et al., 1995). A more recent line of research examines the impact that service learning programs (where adolescents perform community service as a class or graduation requirement) have on the level of political involvement of those engaged in them (Billig, 2000; Galston, 2003; Niemi et al., 2000; Walker, 2002). Indeed, within the range of activities expected to build the adolescents' civicism at the level of both attitudes and behavior, participation in service learning has captured a great deal of attention.

The image offered by the literature on service learning and its effects on youth is mixed, preventing one from arriving at definite conclusions. The more pessimistic studies find either negligible effects from service learning on civic responsibility or effects which are not sufficiently enduring to have a significant impact later in life. (cf. Galston, 2001). Other studies reassert what has been found with respect to classical civic education, the fact that service learning is more effective during the late years of high school (Melchior et al, 1999). In their comparative assessment of the effects of service learning and community service, Astin et al. (2000) reveal that service-learning programs have a positive impact on academic achievement, values, self-efficacy, leadership, career plans and plans to participate in further service after college, with the most significant effects found on academic performance and on values.

b. The effects of classroom climate on youth development of democratic values and civic skills.

One of the first referential studies centered on classroom based practices was that by Langton and Jennings (1968), a study which revealed that high school civics courses had little or no effect on students' political knowledge. Decades later, Niemi and Hepburn (1998) identified that, from the perspective of civic education, what is extremely important is the way civic education is taught, the methods used in class, and the congruence between the content of the lectures and the socio-political reality. Certainly, the most recent analyses of the role of civic education and the formation of democratic values go beyond a narrow focus on curriculum.

Much of this new trend is based on a reevaluation of John Dewey's influential work on the role of education for democracy. Therefore, civic education should not be limited to teaching facts about politics; instead, the process must focus to a much greater extent on the interactive development of relevant social and cognitive skills (Freyberg-Inan and Cristescu, 2006).

The importance of classroom environment and the cultivation of an open climate that encourages discussion (thus creating a bridge between youth and the surrounding political events and developments) is a recurrent theme in the literature (Hess, 2004; Hess and Posselt, 2002). Thus, the focus of classroom climate has moved towards teaching pedagogies.

B. Deliberative pedagogies and their effect on youth development of democratic values and civic skills.

The most prominent body of literature on this issue is concerned with the impact of students' critical thinking exercises on their democratic values and attitudes. The pioneering study of Goodlad (1984) considered critical thinking crucial to the nurturing of a democratic citizenry. Moreover, in almost all studies on instructional procedures – discussion and dialogue play a key role (Commeyaras, 1993; Terenzini et al., 1995; Tsui, 1999, 2002; Yang and Chung, 2009) in enhancing critical thinking skills and attitudes, all of which are important ingredients of the youth democratic citizenship.

John Dewey (1916, 1938), philosopher and education reformist, considers that learning is based mainly on the active involvement of students in the act of teaching. This theory is at the basis of a series of contemporary studies that consider that students learn more efficiently through active involvement, discussing and applying the learned concepts, than through the traditional teaching practices. (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Lewis and Williams, 1994; Bean, 1996).

Considering these active learning pedagogies, a series of researchers and education experts recommend the use of the so-called deliberative pedagogies. (Dewey, 1916; Gutmann, 1999; Strachan, 2006; Reich, 2007; Alfaro, 2008; Goodin, 2008). Bridges (1994) characterized deliberation as a collaborative group discussion that is analytical, reasonably reflective, and painstaking. It is a purposeful and serious discourse that does not rush toward a decision but rather toward careful consideration of alternative points of views and choices (Bridges, 1994).

The essence of deliberation is two-fold: a. to weigh alternatives and discuss all possible courses of action related to a public problem (Parker, 2001); To focus on “What should/could we do?” toward resolving the question of the right action, rather than solving the problem (Dillon, 1994).

Browsing through the vast majority of relevant literature, one can observe the various numbers of examples and approaches. Still, a general description of these pedagogies would claim that deliberative education is comprised of a set of techniques and methods that include discourse, communication and deliberation. (Claxton, 2008) The most important examples of such pedagogies include discussions (controversial public issues) (Campbell, 2008), the use or simulations of different forms of deliberative forums (Gastil și Dillard, 1999; Harriger and McMillan, 2007), as well as debates (Keller, Wittaker and Burke, 2001). Deliberative forums differ from debates in that a debate keeps participants in deeply entrenched positions, whereas deliberation asks participants to listen to each other to develop a deeper understanding of alternative viewpoints (Heanue, Kranich, & Willingham, 2003).

In the following section, these different approaches to deliberative pedagogy and their effects will be treated separately.

a. The effect of an open-classroom environment and discussions on the development of youth democratic values and civic skills.

David Campbell (2008), in his paper “Voice in the Classroom: How an Open Classroom Climate Fosters Political Engagement Among Adolescents”, used data from CIVED, a major study of civic education conducted in 1999. In his research, he found out that an open classroom climate has a positive impact on adolescents’ civic knowledge and appreciation of political conflict, even upon controlling for numerous individual, classroom, school, and district characteristics. In addition, an open classroom environment fosters young people’s intention to be an informed voter. Results further show that exposure to an open classroom climate at school can partially compensate for the disadvantages of young people with low socioeconomic status.

Continuing a similar idea, Torney-Purta, Wilkenfeld, and Barber (2008) examine country differences in students’ knowledge pertaining to human rights compared with other forms of civic knowledge, and in students’ attitudes toward promoting and practicing human rights. A

hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) analysis examines student-level predictors (e.g., gender and school experiences) and country-level predictors (e.g., history of democracy) of rights-related knowledge and attitudes. Students' experiences of democracy at school and with international issues have a positive association with their knowledge of human rights. Significant gender differences also exist. Looking at rights-related attitudes, students with more knowledge of human rights, more frequent engagement with international topics, and more open class and school climates held stronger norms supporting social movement citizenship, had more positive attitudes toward immigrants' rights, and were more politically efficacious.

A rather recent study, tries to compare the effects of different pedagogies in teaching civic education. Dasonneville, Quintelier, Hooghe and Claes (2012) distinguish between formal civic education, an open classroom climate, and active learning strategies, and explore their relation with political interest, efficacy, trust, and participation. The results indicate that formal civic education (classroom instruction) and active learning strategies (school council membership and, to a lesser extent, group projects) are positively related to political attitudes and behavior. An open classroom climate, on the other hand, is significantly related to political trust. The authors conclude that there is no reason to privilege specific forms of civic education, as each form relates to different relevant political attitudes and behaviors. The analysis relies on the results from a two-year panel study among late adolescents in Belgium.

b. The effect of deliberative forums on the development of youth democratic values and civic skills.

In a rather recent article, Gastil (2004) explored the development of democratic habits among students in adult civic education through the use of deliberative discussions. In his first study, Gastil used a quasi-experimental design to employ NIF-style deliberative forums in one class ($n = 76$) and regular class activities without deliberation in another ($n = 73$). Students completed a survey at the end of the course to measure valuation and expectancy of political outcomes, political self-efficacy, political group efficacy, community identity, and civic duty. Participation in the deliberative forums were only significantly correlated with one political belief; group efficacy ($r = -.18$, $p = .048$). However, Gastil also suggested further research, to provide a better indication of the impact of deliberation.

Gastil (2004) then conducted a second study involving participants with different educational experiences to also examine the effects of NIF on the development of democratic habits. Participants (n = 177) were recruited by contacting NIF forum moderators and were asked to complete similar survey questions asked in the first study. Overall, Gastil did not find any clear association between NIF experiences and political conversation behaviors. Gastil concluded that engaging in deliberative discussions could promote broader political conversations but may not promote the full range of democratic effects as proponents believed. However, Gastil also suggested a longitudinal study to provide a better indication of long-term impact of deliberation.

c. The effect of debates on the development of youth democratic values and civic skills.

Another type of deliberative pedagogy, identified in the reviewed literature is that of using debates as a teaching method, or as a method for engaging students during classroom activities. (Keller, Wittaker and Burke, 2001) There is a wide array of literature that argues for the role of debates in pedagogy, being recommended by various experts in education. (Bean, 1996; Bonwell and Eison (1991) or Schroeder și Ebert (1983)

A great number from these methodical observations suggest that the debates are very efficient pedagogies for creating a participatory environment (Green and Klub, 1990), which provokes discussions even after the classroom activities finished. (Green and Klub, 1990) Joe Bellon (2000) makes a systematic literature review with the studies/articles that discuss the effects of using debates, concluding with recommendation for using this method in the entire curriculum. He considers that the benefits for using this method are both for students and for teachers, or even for the entire society.

In the case of students, the most obvious benefit is the development of communication skills. (Goodwin, 2003; Allen, et al, 1999; Williams, McGee și Worth, 2001; Combs și Bourne, 1994) In the same time, Semlak și Shields (1997) the students that are involved in debates show better results in the 3 communication abilities (analysis, delivery and organization). These conclusions are similar with the ones from the study of Colbert and Biggers (1985) who concludes that debates develop interpersonal communication, as well as public speaking.

The most documented effects of using debates in the classroom are linked with the critical thinking abilities. (Colbert, 1987; Bellon, 2000; Goodwin, 2003; Colbert, 1995; Peace, 2011; Omelicheva și Avdeyeva, 2008; Bonwell and Eison, 1991; Jagger, 2013) One of the most important and relevant research, in this sense, is done by Allen et. al. (1995). They conclude that both the argumentation classes and the participation in debates' competitions develop the critical thinking abilities. Other documented effects are: self-esteem (Dauber, 1989; Fine, 1999), empathy (Goodwin, 2003; Berdine, 1987), the experience of constructive controversy or tolerance (Johnson, 1979, 1988, 2008; Vo, și Morris, 2006) or even the decrease of violence. (Bellon, 2000)

Reviewing the existing literature one can identify its diversity in terms of approach as well as research methods. Most of the research is done using qualitative research methods, except the one dealing with debates and critical thinking measurements. In this sense, more standardized research would be needed, especially for cross-national or comparative studies.

In the same time, there is no unitary understanding of what deliberative pedagogies refer to. Consequently, an in depth theoretical and conceptual introspection into the existent literature would provide a clearer understanding of what deliberative pedagogies are and how one could implement them. In the same time, it would create the possibility for comparative studies.

To conclude, one can say that there is an obvious recent interest in democratic education and more recently, in deliberative pedagogies as a way to enhance the civic and democratic skills in youth. The aim of this paper was to summarize the recent developments in this field; critically inform the thinking of education researchers and practitioners, but mostly to stimulate the use of research and to identify possible future research agendas.

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