

Education for Democratic Processes in Schools and Classrooms

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Introduction

For democracies to be effective and to ensure their future they require the active participation of their citizens. Citizens may acquire the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions to be active citizens from many sources, but it is well recognised that schooling should, and can, play a major role in that process (Dewey, 1916; Gutman, 1987; 1999; Hahn, 1998; Patrick, 1999; Crick, 2000). Schools provide a commonly available opportunity for all future citizens to acquire the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions necessary to enable them to be effective in their democracy (Apple & Benne, 1995; Parker, 1996; Patrick, 1999; Print, 1999).

The past decade has witnessed significant attempts to activate policy and programmes for sustaining democracy through schooling. While considerable attention has focused on the newly emerging democratic States of Eastern Europe and the former USSR (Plasser, Ulram & Waldrauch, 1998), the established Western democracies have also expressed concerns at the lack of active engagement of their young citizens and what this might mean for their education systems. For example, England (Advisory Committee on Citizenship, 1998), Scotland (2001), Denmark (1999) and the United States (Centre for Civic Education, 1994; National Commission on Civic Renewal, 1998) have all conducted inquiries and reviewed their policy on how democratic citizenship might be sustained through educational programmes.

In the late 1990s, the Council of Europe conducted a major study in democratic citizenship across Europe. It advocated a far stronger presence of education for democratic citizenship within European schools. Concepts and competences were considered and devised for how education systems and schools might incorporate more effective programmes (Veldhuis, 1997; Audigier, 1999).

And if ever the need for programmes in education for democratic citizenship was evident, it is now. In the broadest sense, September 11th signified the importance of promoting democracy and mutual understanding amongst people, as have the events of Northern Ireland, the Balkans, the Middle East and many other places of obvious and less obvious conflict. To achieve this, the school system must play a central position in teaching democracy in those societies.

Yet attempts to encourage 'democratic schools' have been limited and largely unsuccessful (Wood, 1992; Apple & Benne, 1995; Mann & Patrick, 2000). Internationally, calls for specific democratic processes in schools have been met

largely with silence (Torney-Purta, Schwille & Amadeo, 1999; Patrick, 1999). It all appears too difficult for educational systems, schools and teachers to undertake. There are many possible answers to explain why this is so, including the structures and cultures of schools, educational policies and regulations including 'duty of care' as well as a highly competitive school curriculum which encourages high status subjects. However, regardless of the explanations within individual countries, the need to employ more democratic processes to enhance student experience with democracy remains. This article addresses that issue and how one country has approached engaging students through democratic processes in its schools.

One country where we might expect to find such schools is the US. Efforts at forming 'democratic schools' have occurred there in an attempt to bring democracy to life (Wood, 1992; Apple & Beanne, 1995; Becker & Couto, 1996). The type of school that has emerged is one where all actors in the process of schooling, including students '... have the right to participate in the process of decision making. For this reason democratic schools are marked by widespread participation in issues of governance and policy making.' (Apple & Beanne, 1995, p. 9). However, these schools are few in number, are usually funded privately and generally come from an alternative, non-mainstream, school tradition. Furthermore, Apple and Beanne note with regret that 'The idea of democratic schools has fallen on hard times ...' (1995, p. 3). There are many and complex reasons for this, not the least being that the US is an administratively conservative country and the problematic concept of shared power in schools between administrators, students, teachers, and parents.

In Denmark, significant, sustained efforts have been made over many years to implement means by which school students could learn about democracy through active participation in democratic learning experiences. Rather than be taught solely about democracy and democratic citizenship as is the case in most countries, students in Danish schools are able to learn about democracy by actively participating in democratic processes within the school. After examining the need for and concepts underpinning education for democratic processes, this article discusses ways of teaching citizenship and moral education in Denmark.

Much of the material on Denmark in this article is based on two authors' active experiences and reflections as national adviser and history/civics teachers at the upper secondary school level over many years. Drawing from that experience, it is our contention that if countries and education systems want to be effective in helping young people to become active, democratic citizens then it is necessary to integrate democratic practices in the school and the classroom. Students must be given opportunities to influence their every day lives in school and the topics of learning to be addressed through the formal curriculum. Additionally, the teacher's role must be transformed to be more democratic in nature. Instead of mostly transmitting knowledge to students, the teacher must organise the teaching-learning environment as a dialogue where topics are discussed and students are given the opportunity to express and respect different attitudes, arguments and points of view. This is indeed a challenge, not easy to undertake, but one that the Danish experience may prove useful for others.

Active Citizenship, Schools and Democracy

Scholars of educational theory and practice (Dewey, 1916), government and democracy (Gutman, 1987/1999, 1995; Dahl, 1998) and civic education for democracy (Giroux, 1987; Parker, 1996; Hahn, 1998; Patrick, 1999; Crick, 2000) argue that specified, purposeful education is required to develop citizens who can participate as informed, responsible, effective members of democratic political systems. Indeed, they contend that the ultimate aim of education is to prepare effective citizens to maintain democracy. These arguments are based upon two fundamental assumptions from democratic theory which underpin the rationale for civic education:

1. The concept of active citizenship has its origins in the Aristotelian tradition that emphasises participatory democracy and the public sphere of citizenship to help serve the State. For Aristotle, the citizen was one who shared in the running of the government and he was expected to participate in public debate, voting and similar activities, as well as public office. This concept was reinforced over the centuries by writers such as Rousseau, De Tocqueville, and Dewey, for whom the citizen who participates is one who maintains the processes and values of democracy, whilst also looking after his interests.

2. Citizen participation assists with the common good and communitarian spirit for the betterment of all (Engle & Ochoa, 1988; Bahmueller & Patrick, 1999). Education can assist in the development of civil society, one of the key elements necessary to sustain democratic life (Dahl, 1998; Putnam, 2000). Dewey (1916) theorised that participatory dispositions needed by citizens to maintain a democracy are learned through practice in school and the community. Further, he contended, experiential learning was the most effective way for students to learn in schools, including learning to be an active citizen in a democracy. This approach reinforced his belief that 'A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience.' (1916, p. 87).

While the democratic role of schooling may be viewed from an exchange perspective, where individuals pursue their preferences through negotiation and favourable exchanges, March and Olsen (2000) contend the role is really an institutional perspective. Here, school is viewed as a means whereby citizens acquire the understandings and roles that help them participate in a democracy.

As an instrument of democracy, schooling builds the identities that citizens, officials, experts, the powerful, and the weak use to guide their behavior. Those identities moderate the free play of self-interested consequentialist action. As an institution in a democracy, schooling symbolizes the importance of reason and knowledge in a democracy. It celebrates the pursuit, accumulation and transfer of knowledge. It honors learning and proclaims its significance to human society (2000, p. 168)

Hochschild & Scovronick (2000) argue that an important role of schools in promoting democracy is to teach democratic practices.

These include following properly designated procedures, negotiating rather than using violence to secure what you want, respecting those who disagree,

taking turns, expressing your views persuasively, organising with others for change, competing fairly, and winning (or losing) gracefully (p. 213)

Without active, participating citizens, it has been widely and persuasively argued that the future of any democracy will be severely threatened (Dahl, 1998; Patrick, 1999; Putnam, 2000). Increasingly, concern has been raised that the future of many established Western democracies is under threat from disengaged citizens. 'In short, Americans have been dropping out in droves, not merely from political life, but from organized community life more generally.' (Putnam, 2000, p. 64). As young people in these democracies demonstrate increasing indifference towards even the minimum requirements of citizen participation such as voting, jury duty, and being informed on issues, so democracy is threatened (Niemi & Junn, 1998; Advisory Committee on Citizenship, 1998; Putnam, 1995; 2000).

These problems are not the exclusive domain of one country. The International Association for the Assessment of Educational Achievement (IEA) conducted a Civics Study from the mid-1990s to identify what students in schools know about civic education and democratic citizenship. The first phase of the study found limited levels of knowledge, disengaged students and superficial democratic practices in schools (Torney-Purta, Schwille & Amadeo, 1999). The second phase, an international comparative assessment of 14-year-old student civic understanding, presented conclusions of considerable concern: students were skeptical of traditional forms of political engagement (apart from voting); television was their main source of news and political information; students with higher levels of civic knowledge were more likely to be engaged in civic and political activities as adults; schools that model democratic processes were most effective in promoting civic engagement and knowledge; teachers recognised the importance of citizenship education; and students were supportive of a new civic culture which emphasised democratic principles, processes and values (Torney-Purta, Lehman, Oswald & Schulz, 2001).

The increasing indifference towards aspects of democratic life by citizens reflects a decline in social capital in those societies, a situation prevalent in many Western democracies including those in Europe (van Deth, Maraffi, Newton & Whitely, 1999; Putnam, 2000). The impact of such a decline is potentially serious for the long-term stability of democracies and hence reinforces the need for engaging students in active democratic citizenship. The degree to which students acquire democratic values and dispositions, in addition to knowledge about democratic citizenship, which are then applied to democratic behaviour, is critical to sustain our democratic way of life.

Theory and Practice of Learning Democracy

That schools, and particularly secondary schools, are the logical place for learning about civics and democratic citizenship has received wide support (Dewey, 1916; Giroux, 1989; Apple & Beanne, 1995; Hahn, 1998; Patrick, 1999). Thus, the secondary school should provide opportunity for critical democratic citizenship through critical pedagogy and critical democratic values so that students may become participative and responsible adult citizens (Giroux, 1989).

While theory explicates education for democratic citizenship we also know that students can learn to be more politically enlightened and engaged if they participate

in schooling (Nie, Junn & Stehlik-Barry, 1996) Indeed, the Citizen Participation Study showed clear positive correlations between the level of education and civic knowledge as well as civic engagement (Nie *et al.*, 1996). These included positive correlations between years of schooling and seven attributes of democratic citizenship.

In her research on citizenship education across a small group of countries, Carole Hahn was optimistic about the contribution of citizenship education programmes to democratic preparation. She concluded that:

... classroom climates that foster open inquiry and are reinforced by school climates that encourage participatory civic behaviours can together give young people the opportunity to experience democratic life ... Students learn the theory of democracy by experiencing it in practice. Through a process of deliberation, reflection and communication they develop commitments to the common good and to intellectual freedom, where diversity is valued. Preparation for adult civic life is school civic life in which the political and associational life of the community and of individuals are joined (1998, p. 247)

Although formal education has been identified as the logical source for learning about democracy, it is often perceived as the problem as well. An abundance of evidence, particularly the NAEP Civics study of the later 1990s in the US, clearly demonstrates low levels of student understanding of government, politics, civil society and civic knowledge generally and linkages with a commensurate civic disengagement (Lutkus *et al.*, 1999; Niemi & Junn, 1998). This, however, is not restricted to the US.

The recent IEA Civics Study found that, while students in most countries have an understanding of fundamental democratic values and institutions, they lack depth of such understanding (Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2001). More positively, the IEA study also found that:

- Schools which model democratic practices are most effective in promoting civic knowledge and engagement;
- Evidence exists of a ‘new’ civic culture amongst students characterised by less hierarchy, more individual decision-making and less traditional political activities, such as joining political parties or standing for office;
- Teachers recognise the importance of citizenship education for young people and seek to encourage it;
- However, the difference between the ideal of citizenship education (critical thinking, group work, values development) and classroom reality (textbooks, teacher talk, worksheets) is extensive.

Significantly, the IEA study found that ‘In every country, the civic knowledge of 14-year-olds is a positive predictor of their expressed willingness to vote as adults. It is the most powerful predictor in many countries even when accounting for other factors.’ (Torney-Purta, *et al.*, p. 146). Despite this positive outcome, the IEA report demonstrates overall that, despite the input of current educational programmes, much is needed to help prepare active citizens for our future democracies.

Certainly, the research data in the field indicate that standard didactic teaching of citizenship education has not been sufficient to ensure that young people become active citizens in their democracies. Further, the research on student knowledge and understanding of democratic citizenship suggests that students will also require substantially greater conceptual understanding as well as experiential learning in democratic processes to become effective citizens. To examine this possibility, we shall consider an example of an approach to teaching democracy which emphasises learning democratic processes experientially.

Democratic Processes in Practice: the case of Denmark

The Danish educational system is comprehensive in nature, providing education for all students at local schools through a broad-based curriculum. It has, until recently, had a long oral tradition, reflecting its Nordic heritage. Schools also have a strong tradition of using very few exams, reflecting a more cooperative than competitive culture. Despite its small land area and many islands, education is highly decentralised. At the central level, the Ministry of Education initiates proposals for curricula, but it is up to the local authorities to work out their own curricula for the schools in their area.

The People's School, or *Folkeskolen*, is a comprehensive school where pupils stay in the same class for nine years, until about the age of 16. This comprises what is known as primary and lower secondary education in most other countries. There are no exams until after the nine years of schooling and then only in very few subjects. For example, there are no exams in civics and history, despite their importance. After grade nine, one can choose grade ten, which is more or less a year of deliberation about the future for 16-year-olds. About 60% of the student cohort choose to continue to grade ten.

Upper secondary schooling can be taken either as a vocational or as an academic stream. About 45% choose vocational training which leads directly to job qualifications such as mechanics, carpenters, shop assistants, etc. Academic education is dominated by the gymnasium which gives students a broad education in many different subjects (about 37% choose this), and the rest of the students choose school forms where either commerce or technology play a significant role. Of the national cohort of 16-year-olds, about 95% start an upper secondary education and about 10% opt out during the three or four years of upper secondary education. About half of secondary school graduates subsequently attend some form of university.

Unlike in the *folkeskolen*, there are exams at upper secondary level, many of which are decentralised and oral. That is the case for history, civics and other social science subjects. The secondary school curricula have very open frameworks and curricula requirements can be fulfilled in various ways which must be decided by teachers and students in common. Within subjects, teachers construct exam questions and a colleague from another school acts as the co-examiner. While this reduces potential bias, it is the cooperative culture of Danish schooling and the less competitive emphasis within examinations that are the dominant factors.

Education for Democracy

To nurture democracy, every school within that society must have as a basic aim the enhancement of that democracy by engaging students in democratic citizenship. Where this has been less than effective, as demonstrated in many countries in recent times (Centre for Civic Education, 1994; Advisory Committee on Citizenship, 1998; National Commission on Civic Renewal, 1998; Danish Ministry of Education, 1999), a review of teaching democracy should be undertaken. Instead of asking what the pupils must know about democracy, the curriculum question should be rephrased as: How can schools engage students to promote active citizens using the agreed knowledge, values and attitudes which constitute democracy?

Teaching democracy and citizenship cannot be regarded as a single issue excluded from the society or culture in which it exists. Many factors need to be taken into consideration in order to understand the relationship between democratic teaching and citizenship education. The conditions for teaching are defined by a myriad of different relationships such as those between society and the school, the school and the parents' demands or expectations, as well as the various competing forces seeking to decide the content and values taught in school. Teaching democracy and citizenship also places different demands on teachers, particularly in relation to personal attitudes and engagement.

Undoubtedly, these issues are resolved differently, depending on the traditions of societies and their concepts of democracy. Despite the tendency to consider 'Western democracies' as a single entity, the reality is that there are many different forms of democracy in Europe, often with quite different structures. Some are constitutional monarchies, whilst some are republics, some have federal systems and others are national, and as democracy in the Western world is closely connected to a national State these democracies are based on different historical traditions which highlight the difficulty of creating common ground for teaching democratic processes and values.

In the discussion on citizenship education and democratic teaching there are two common perceptions of democracy which are mutually dependent. The first views democracy as a form of government. In this sense, democracy is characterised by free and fair elections with a secret ballot, the principle one person/one vote, division and separation of powers, the rule of law, basic human rights like freedom of speech, freedom of religion, etc. This is essentially a technical, institutional perspective, based on structures, procedures, regulations and mechanisms to make governing a people through democratic processes a workable reality.

Alternatively, democracy may be viewed as a philosophy for and the basis of a way of living. Here, it is more concerned with a willingness to compromise, tolerance, a willingness to listen to and be influenced by arguments, maintaining a civil society, and acceptance of other attitudes and opinions. An exchange of views is a key concept here. Fundamentally, this perspective is based upon those values which allow a democracy to function effectively and engage citizens.

These two perceptions reinforce each other because without a form of legal and institutional framework a democratic lifestyle cannot exist effectively and vice versa. Thus, both perceptions are considered necessary for effective education for democratic citizenship. In particular, successful democracies are largely based on

the values which underpin a democratic lifestyle and these values are what democratic teaching tries to develop. This is not an easy task because teaching values within a democracy usually results in contestation of established opinions and traditions.

A fundamental feature of the Danish education system, at both primary and secondary levels, is the belief that democracy must be integrated in the daily teaching-learning experiences of students. The rationale for this approach is that, by teaching about democracy, particularly democratic values, and giving the pupils democratic rights and duties within the classroom, they will have better opportunities to become active democratic citizens. In the following sections, we draw upon examples from the Danish system of education to highlight how democratic values are integrated within school curricula and how pupils may influence both the content and the teaching-learning strategies and have the right to evaluate the teaching within the classroom.

Citizenship Education, Democracy and the School Curriculum

The principal vehicle for learning about democracy in Danish schools is citizenship education. Within the school curriculum, it can be conceptualised as a dual strategy. First, teaching and learning democratic knowledge and values such as human rights, the rule of law, rights and duties according to constitutions, etc. This incorporates the two perceptions of democracy discussed above — a form of government, but also a way of living. Second, citizenship education gives students opportunities of experiencing democracy in the educational system, both through formal learning experiences and through open-minded classrooms where students are allowed to debate controversial issues.

This approach is based upon the premise that democratic values and attitudes cannot be taught within a curriculum which only defines the knowledge domain to be passed on to the pupils. It is not enough to simply transmit knowledge about the constitution, democratic institutions and their formal relationships and interaction. This approach will not give room for discussion or give pupils the possibility to work with conflicting views. It does not allow for controversy in the classroom and therefore will not confront the pupils with democratic values or develop their democratic behaviour.

However, such an approach is problematic. This form of citizenship education means contesting decades of traditional, didactic teaching based on a model of knowledge transmission. But if we want to integrate values and attitudes in teaching citizenship education we must review the teacher's role, long discredited, as an unbiased and objective source of information and replace it with one more attuned to democratic values. This role will undoubtedly create problems because it requires consideration and discussion of democratic values and attitudes. In this situation, the teacher adopts a position that society and parents might regard as their prerogative. Furthermore, many teachers may be uncomfortable explicitly teaching values, even though they personally support those democratic values.

Consequently, a controversial question concerning citizenship education is how to organise the teaching in a way that focuses on values and attitudes and is accepted by parents and society. One might argue that the dilemma is insoluble and therefore only a strictly objective approach to teaching will meet the requirements of society and parents. However, we maintain that this approach will

not promote citizenship education and not enhance democratic education. How then do Danish schools address these concerns?

In Denmark, citizenship education is not compulsory. In primary school, it is integrated with other subjects such as history, geography and social science. At the upper secondary level it is at the core of history/civics which is a compulsory subject over all three years and ends with an oral exam. Religion is also compulsory for the last year of secondary schooling. In terms of student learning, it is a considerable advantage that history/civics is compulsory at this level. Students are 16–19 years old and therefore possess the necessary maturity to use their democratic skills and realise their significance. Furthermore, they are capable of managing the responsibility given them through the law of influencing the learning of content and the working methods.

Therefore teaching citizenship education in Danish schools must involve the student both inside and outside the classroom. Citizenship education outside the classroom means that school life must be organised democratically. That is where students influence their every day life in school through cooperation with the school, teachers, through pupil's council, etc. Second, citizenship education inside the classroom involves understanding democracy but more importantly providing an opportunity where teachers provide a model of democratic teaching in which students can influence both the subject and the teaching methods employed.

Promoting citizenship education in the Danish school system is also problematic when considering the relationship between the nation and the broader region of Europe. Different attitudes, demands and expectations within the national State confront the school, while promoting citizenship education in a European perspective enhances internal differences when juxtaposed with differences between national traditions. To this dilemma there is not just one solution, one tradition that can be transferred and succeed in all other nations and traditions. The only way to work towards a common ground is to exchange experiences and ideas and try to adjust these to Danish traditions.

Democratic Processes in Danish Schools

Creating a democratic school culture also means that the relationship between students and teachers/leaders must be on a more equal basis, must be governed by mutual respect and must be committed to enhancing democratic processes. The last 25 years have witnessed considerable effort at creating a democratic school culture and direct pupil democracy in the Danish education system. This has seen significant pupil participation in the policy-making process of schools. Both the Lower Secondary School (Folkeskolen, age 6–16) and the Upper Secondary School (age 16–19) have elected pupils' councils which have been formalised through legislation.

In 1997, the demand for student participation in democratic processes was formalised when the Folketing (Danish Parliament) passed legislation proclaiming that each Upper Secondary School would establish pupils' councils elected from amongst the pupils. This builds on legislation over the last two decades which had sought to enhance student participation in school decision-making. Schools were also required to ensure that students were represented on all senior councils and committees. An important function of the pupils' councils is to submit reports to

the headmaster on general matters concerning pupils' affairs. This legislation merely formalised what had been in practice for many years, though it did give student participation in school governance the mandate of law.

At the upper secondary level, the pupils' councils also take part in different school committees where they share influence with the teachers and the headmaster, and once a year they organise (nation-wide) an Operation One Day's work. Students do one day's work and the money they earn goes to a specific project for charity (last year for the Roms in Macedonia and this year for the Chiapas Indians in Mexico). In the lower secondary school, the pupils' councils influence matters such as saving energy at school, the annual school party, smoking regulations, extra-curricular activities at school, the nature of project weeks (pupils work cross-curricular and cross-class/age for two weeks), etc.

The presence and structure of these school organisations are neither particularly remarkable nor different from similar councils in other countries. What is significant is the approach taken by schools to the operation of the student councils and the willingness of the school staff to engage with students in decision-making. The idea is that in giving the pupils opportunity to affect decision-making they learn the processes and rules of democracy and they learn that taking part in a democratic culture means to influence, and be influenced in everyday life.

To assist with conceptualisation on how schools might promote democratic citizenship, Danish educators have drawn upon the work of the French educationalist François Audigier. He developed the Didactic Triangle (Audigier, 1998) in which he argued for core competences or fundamental, yet mutually dependent, categories of behaviour to enhance democratic citizenship amongst students which need to be found in school programmes — cognitive competences, affective competences and capacities for action.

- Cognitive Competences assume a knowledge of (a) the law, democracy as a system of government, and the current political system, (b) current states of society at several levels, (c) procedures which are necessary in order to participate in social life, including debating skills, and d) the values underlying democratic citizenship education.
- Affective Competences comprise the individual's choice of values which form the basis of democratic citizenship. They include principles such as liberty, equality and solidarity which need to be adopted as personal convictions.
- Capacities for Action, or social competences, involve a) the ability to co-exist with others and demonstrate a sense of social responsibility, b) the ability to resolve conflicts in accordance with the principles of democratic law, c) the capacity to participate in public debate (Audigier, 1998).

To promote democratic citizenship effectively, according to Audigier, schools need to not only facilitate knowledge acquisition but more importantly encourage democratic behaviour through active participation in classrooms. He argues that democratic citizenship in schools is created in the interaction between the three levels, though the Action Competences are the most important when it comes to active citizenship.

Since the 1970s, many schools in Denmark, particularly *gymnasier*, have applied the policy whereby students are engaged in the decision-making mechanisms of the school. Schools like the Himmelev Gymnasium in Roskilde, the Allerød Gymnasium and the Fredricksborg Gymnasium, both near Copenhagen (Danish Ministry of Education, 1999) demonstrate how students may participate in school decision-making. At the Allerød Gymnasium, elected students are represented on some ten standing committees of the school and participate in all major decision-making within the school community with the support of the school principal (Danish Ministry of Education, 1999).

At the Himmelev Gymnasium, the process of engaging students in committee participation commenced in the late 1970s. While the headmaster is responsible for the school, especially the financial accounts, a high level of pupil democratic participation has been achieved through considerable delegation of power by the headmaster (Danish Ministry of Education, 1999). Major decision-making is made through several non-hierarchical committees in which students usually have equal representation with teachers including the Budget Committee (non-salary school finances), the Buildings Committee (maintenance and equipment), the Group Formation Committee (class and subject decisions) and the Excursion Committee (excursions, study tours and exchanges). In all these instances, the influence and power of the democratically-elected student representatives are substantial and reflective of democratic society.

In her analysis of Danish schools within her international comparative study, Hahn (1998) found that students in *gymnasier* demonstrated comparatively sophisticated and active levels of political attitudes and participation. They were the students most likely to have taken classes in which they regularly explored controversial public policy questions and were encouraged to express their views on them. Similar findings in other international studies on civic education support these conclusions.

The IEA Civics Study (Torney-Purta, *et al.*, 2001) noted that students in Danish schools were more likely to be participative and knowledgeable about democracy than most other European students and about the same as fellow Scandinavian students. Furthermore, Danish students reported the most open classroom climate in their schools of the 28 participating countries. The latter has been closely and consistently associated with encouraging and nurturing democratic processes and values in students.

A traditional aspect of promoting democratic processes within schools in many countries has been the student council or some form of student government. The intention of these bodies is to both replicate a form of democratic governance for students to emulate and also to engage students in participating in their school's governance. In the IEA study, Danish students reported one of the highest participation rates in student councils or student government, along with other Scandinavian countries, Greece and Cyprus (Torney-Purta, *et al.*, 2001, p. 142). Interestingly, Danish students also reported high levels of participation in civic-related organisations outside school which conducted voluntary activities to help the community, especially raising money for social causes (Torney-Purta, *et al.*, 2001). Such participation is seen as a positive predictor of future participation in adult life and a guide to the condition of social capital within societies (Van Deth, *et al.*, 2001; Putnam, 2000; Torney-Purta, *et al.*, 2001).

Democracy in the Classroom

How can democratic processes be acquired and enhanced by students in classrooms? Surely the very concept of the classroom is not conducive to learning about democracy through practice. The very structure of school administration, the need for 'duty of care' by teachers, and long traditions of didactic teaching strategies mitigate against the application of democratic processes in classrooms. Nevertheless, Danish educators, supported by and often led by Danish legislators, have successfully addressed these perceived barriers.

A potentially more far-reaching means of creating a school-based democratic atmosphere is generating a democratic culture in the classroom. A positive, conducive classroom culture is a significant factor in promoting education for democratic citizenship because, within a specific context, students experience an atmosphere of security and trust where they can experience and practise their democratic skills. In her research, Carole Hahn found a positive correlation between an open classroom culture and the development of citizenship education:

... when students report that they frequently discuss controversial issues in their classes, perceive that several sides of issues are presented and discussed, and feel comfortable expressing their views, they are more likely to develop attitudes that have the potential to foster later civic participation than are students with such experiences (Hahn, p. 233)

Hahn's study, using a set of IEA classroom climate data, also noted that ... elementary school children held class meetings to resolve class problems and to advise the school council. Older students conducted inquiries into public policy issues. In the upper years of the Folkeskolen (14 years of age), Danish students reported in their schools amongst the highest levels of learning to cooperate in groups. However, they also reported one of the lowest scores of learning to understand people who have different ideas (Torney-Purta, *et al.*, p. 136). The latter, however, reflects more a traditional cultural homogeneity than a lack of substantive programmes in democratic citizenship. By contrast, similar students in Australia, a highly multicultural country with minimal but growing citizenship education, reported average levels of civic knowledge, but high levels of understanding people with different ideas.

While such a democratic culture may be generated in different ways, to be effective it is imperative that students have some form of control over the content to be learnt, that they participate in discussions with other students and that they have the opportunity to express their arguments and opinions. These requirements call for considerable understanding and empathy from teachers and consequently it is very important that they are capable of creating an atmosphere of security and trust within the classroom. This approach also involves open and flexible curricula. Teachers and students must be given the opportunity to deal with controversial and relevant issues. The Danish experience also claims that educational systems should not be so exam-driven and overloaded that it is impossible to give space for exchanges of views and discussions.

In considering how classrooms might serve as vehicles for supporting education for democratic citizenship, Danish educators have also argued for Audigier's model of three competences. The model, they contend, calls for

working methods or teaching strategies that can generate a democratic attitude within individual classrooms. The interactions which generate democratic citizenship need a classroom culture which is conducive to the transmission of knowledge but, above all, to facilitating discussion, exchange of opinions, expression of attitudes, tolerance, mutual respect for difference of opinion and support for social justice. Thus the creation of a democratic classroom goes hand in hand with promoting citizenship education.

For Danish educators, the fundamental condition for developing democracy in the classroom is the engagement of students in meaningful decision-making. Students' influence on the selection of school subjects is one important means of creating a democratic culture in the classroom. But more important are the teaching and working methods. Teaching must be organised in a dialogue where students and teachers respect each other's views and attitudes. This demands that the teacher's role be transformed from a traditional didactic, authoritarian one to a facilitating, personal role. To some critics this might mean a decline in professional authority in the classroom. But if we maintain an authoritarian teacher's role, where the ends are transferring objective knowledge, students are left without experience in formulating opinions or taking part in discussions and debates — experiences that are at the very core of a democratic society.

Classroom Organisation in Danish Schools

Figuratively, the organisation of teaching-learning processes in Danish schools is often referred to as 'learning rooms'. In this context, 'rooms' are not conceived as physical locations but rather as different ways or forms of organising learning activities. Indeed, teachers may alternate between one form and another within a single teaching session while remaining in the same location. Consequently, multiple classroom strategies may be applied when teaching democratic citizenship, though they are usually grouped into three categories — the 'instruction' room, the 'training' room and the 'study' room (Danish Ministry of Education, 1999). For Danish educators, the rooms match Audigier's conceptualisation of democratic citizenship where the instruction room is the main frame for promoting cognitive competences, whereas the training room enhances affective competences and the study room serves to fuse both cognitive and affective competences into capacities for action (Danish Ministry of Education, 1999). Each has a substantial, if different, impact on the application of citizenship education in classrooms.

Although the 'instruction room' is commonly found in Danish classrooms, it generates the least number of instances to enhance citizenship education. Here, the teacher acts as chairman in an essentially didactic context. The focus is imparting knowledge and skills, though by contributions from both the teacher and students on subject matter, material read and worked with. The goal is to enable the students to proceed on their own. However, it is also, on the surface, a forum that is closest to a democratic dialogue\discussion. It should be noted that dialogue in itself does not necessarily develop desired citizenship skills and values because a dialogue independent of substance only has the purpose of testing whether certain skills have been achieved. The dialogue must address democratic values through an exchange of views and opinions, preferably around a subject that might present a controversial issue or dilemma. Furthermore, this

approach raises the dilemma of the teacher's personal values and attitudes and to what extent they should or must be revealed. In a classroom where democratic behaviour and organisation are the tradition this will not be a problem because students are familiar with the teacher who may express personal opinions with which the students do not have to agree. But in a classroom where the more authoritarian teacher's role is the tradition it can create problems by constraining discussion. The Danish experience has confirmed that it is important to ensure that students have the opportunity to listen, discuss and take a stand in discussions.

By contrast, in the 'training room' students work individually or in groups enlarging and applying their knowledge and the skills acquired in the instruction room. They work at their own pace and in a manner which they decide will expand their knowledge and skills. The teacher functions more as a coach or tutor, encouraging the students to ask questions about their decisions, such as what skills do they possess already and what do they want to be better at. While the teacher is still nominally in charge of the classroom, the students are forced to make decisions, to cooperate and to take responsibility for their work.

The most student-centred context is the 'study room' where students work in groups on topics and problems from real life which take the form of cases, projects and cross-curricular projects. Students take greater responsibility for their own learning, defining and formulating problems which interest them and locating the necessary material and literature to resolve them. In this 'room' the teacher acts as a consultant and 'discussion' partner, yet making sure that the students are working towards a result. This room is the most productive in enhancing democratic citizenship within students with its emphasis upon student independence, responsibility and active participation.

Danish educators believe that these classrooms have a positive impact on promoting democratic citizenship in students. In the training and study room in particular, students are encouraged to be independent, learning how to find adequate information, present different positions and communicate their results either in written or oral form. They must also be prepared to be challenged by questions and discussions with the other students and the teacher.

There is, of course, a common curriculum framework in Denmark that must be taken into consideration. After all, the school system as a whole must make a contribution to the coherence of society and the development of citizens. But within this framework there must be options and space for local decisions at the level of school and classroom. The difficulty is to blend a decentralised system with a central core. For Danish educators, the idea behind these requirements is the notion that citizenship education cannot be taught as an isolated school subject but must be integrated in both subjects and in the teacher's and school's approach to democratic behaviour. There is a strong belief that promoting citizenship education cannot succeed if students are confronted with an authoritarian school system. Only by acting democratically at all levels within the school and developing the abilities to act as democratic citizens later on in life can citizenship education be promoted effectively in students.

Some might argue that giving the students influence over the subjects to be studied leaves the teacher in a difficult position, encourages irrelevant, trendy subjects and complicates control over what is going on in the classroom. Such possibilities exist more particularly where classrooms have not encouraged

independence in students. But the problem could be minimised by a classroom setting in which students have meaningful influence over decisions. The Danish experience and educational preference are to believe that students will act responsibly and hence provide them optimum conditions to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and values to become active citizens within their democracy.

The IEA civics data tend to support these views. In reporting on their participation in civic-related organisations, Danish students were amongst the most active members of student councils and school or class parliaments. While they were not very likely to participate in a youth organisation affiliated with a political party and reported remarkably low participation in environmental and human rights organisations, Danish 14-year-old students were comparatively very active in voluntary activities to assist the community and especially in participating in charities that collected money for a social cause (Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2001).

However, the traditional role of the teacher, where the teacher is the authority and didactically transmits 'objective' knowledge, is clearly problematic in such situations. Traditional didactic pedagogy cannot address the needs in democratic teaching and would present a significant problem to such teachers. Danish educators believe that the teacher does not lose authority in this environment, rather authority is redefined to include students. Despite this sharing of decision-making students still need the teacher's guidance, overview of subject matter, ability to respond to relevant questions and to serve as a qualified counterpart in discussions and study work.

Nevertheless, the Danish approach to classroom learning raises at least two significant concerns for educators and educational systems. In most societies teachers are entrusted with the welfare of students and have a legal 'duty of care' to protect them. Where authority and decision-making are shared within the classroom will teachers continue to take the same responsibility for the students in their care? In such an environment can students democratically overrule a teacher's decision which is based on the need to care for them?

Second, a more democratic approach to teaching-learning leaves the teacher with a potential problem to resolve — to what extent will personal values and attitudes influence one's teaching? Clearly, this approach presents a powerful opportunity for the teacher to manipulate student attitudes through the guise of democratic education. Much depends upon the professional approach and values of the teacher in ensuring a classroom culture based on security and trust so that students can express themselves without fear of manipulation and reprisals.

However, it may also be argued that in a democratic school system students will be aware that different attitudes are expressed. In her comparative research study Carole Hahn touched upon this problem. '... The gymnasium law says that teachers must teach in 'pluralistic ways', presenting many sides. If the students think the teacher is just indoctrinating students into the teacher's point of view, they can complain, and inspectors for the ministry will observe classes it was easy to present multiple views on issues in Denmark because there were many political parties with different views, and students regularly see the parties working through differences to form policies in coalition' (Hahn, 1998, p. 201). Evidently, the Danish political system makes it difficult to indoctrinate students and this is largely reflected in the education system. This is, however, not necessarily the case for other European countries and consequently it is

important that this problem is taken into account when conducting democratic teaching.

Conclusion

Democracies rely upon the active participation of their citizenry to ensure their viability. Schools can and should play a major role in preparing citizens to play their democratic roles in adult life. But how can the necessary knowledge, skills and values available through school programmes be provided to achieve that goal effectively? Equally important, how can schools provide an environment conducive for students to learn their rights and responsibilities within their democracy? And how do these issues apply to European schools in a time of extensive political change?

Across Europe in the 1990s there has been a significant growth of interest in how to prepare young people in schools to become meaningful citizens within their democracies. What has emerged is a new form of education for democratic citizenship. From numerous inquiries and reports the direction for citizenship education is one which educates students broadly to become active citizens within their democracies. But how can citizenship education effectively prepare participative citizens for their democracies?

In Denmark, citizenship education is mainly concerned with creating an environment in which students learn about democracy through participation. At the school level, Danish students participate in democratic decision-making through elected student councils and elected school committees. These committees have power over significant decisions affecting students' daily lives.

At the classroom level, citizenship education in Denmark gives students substantial influence over the subject matter to be taught and the teaching-learning strategies to be used. Furthermore, teaching democracy in Denmark is not just learning about the institutions of democracy but more importantly making democracy a part of the school and classroom experience. Rather than the authoritarian teaching methods dominant in many countries, Danish schools encourage students to learn about democracy by experiencing democratic processes in school. This approach, Danish educators argue, will help create active citizens for the future.

For democratic teaching to succeed in schools it must be conceptualised and practised as a dialogue between students and the teacher. It is not sufficient that teaching is organised democratically, what is taught and how it is taught must be negotiated and subsequently evaluated. The process must be a dialogue where students assess teaching as well as their own contributions and efforts. This last dimension is very important because students must understand that with the right to influence their learning follows the responsibility to participate and to learn.

This approach is not easy for teachers because not only do they have to replace didactic, authoritarian teaching with a more personal approach, but they must also take students' opinions into account and even change their teaching according to students' critique. Yet engaging students in such internal assessment force them to share responsibility for their school learning, their everyday life in the school, and their independence and negotiating skills.

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