

# Does America Have A Widespread Education?

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## Introduction

The perspective of whether education provides a widespread effect in America or not has been one of the important questions in the field of education. The debate is primarily aimed at the influence of education in terms of promoting democracy in America. A response to this raised a prominent point towards education being one of the influential factors for the success of a nation. Garcia Machel, in a statement, referred to this aspect by mentioning that the word that encompasses the importance of education can be summarized in the meaning of “empowerment” (Global, E. F. A. *Overcoming inequality: why governance matters*). A critical understanding in regards to education reveals that it serves as the basic commodity, presenting its importance in aspects of spreading literacy, building confidence, and making education accessible for children belonging to a poor economic class. Providing education to marginalized children and those belonging to poor economic classes will enable the youth group to participate in local bodies of politics that are directly related to the management of resources such as health, education, and water. Numerous research revealed that education plays a dominant role in primary schools, endorsing democracy and presenting people with an understanding of the nullification or rejection of non-democratic motives or alternatives.

## Thesis Statement

The effects of education as a widespread influence on democracy in America will be further discussed in the paper.

## Discussion

During the year 1970, numerous breakdowns in the regime for Latin Americans brought around a challenging perspective on the well-known belief that education was a promoter and enabler of democracy among the people or in society. This perception of the profound relation between democracy and education served as the central point of focus during the creation and specifications of different systems created to serve in the domain of public education during the year 1816. An Argentine educator by the name of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento presented the proposal for the establishment of “The Popular School,” aiming at unifying children from different ethnic backgrounds and providing them with educational means to serve as citizens in the newly independent republics of America. Sarmiento extensively emphasized the importance of education as a means for bringing

about a change in society and giving birth to effective citizenship.

Sarmiento's ideas had an extensive reach over various countries, inclusive of Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile, these countries being the proud promoters of education and owning a well-formulated education system with higher achievements. Around the time of the collapse of the democratic system in different countries around the year 1970, people began to question the validity of education in terms of its influence on educating people about democracy. Although in consideration of this, the present-day scenario presents a different aspect towards the importance implied for education and democracy since the authoritarian shadows have begun to resurface in different states of America.

## Role Of Education For Democracy

In consideration towards education's role in preserving and promoting democracy, it is also understood that education by itself does not imply any effects or changes in the social, economic and political structures in a country. However, education can present an effective method of contribution for democracy and democratic form of citizenship in two well-researched methods. The first method outlines the importance of making education accessible for children from different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. Notably, in the last century, most of the Latin American's demonstrated the usefulness of this approach by expanding education and making it accessible for every child in the country, as well as making it mandatory throughout the country. Although, surveys into this matter later revealed the efforts to be effective but enough to bring about a relative change in the system. The second method outlines the approach towards identification of citizens who show an interest towards democracy and specifically supplying them with the needed skills, values and democratic knowledge to reform their attitude and prepare them as effective democratic citizens. A popular belief suggests that most of the efforts in terms of providing citizens with the basic education of democracy have been through means of educating children about human rights, forms of democratic governance, and seeking out optimal means of resolving conflicts in a peaceful manner.

Among other forms of educational institutes that provide this form of education were noticeably non-governmental organizations, with coursing classes spanning for short duration of time. This is mainly due to initiatives for democratic awareness education, taken by the Government, are restricted to courses for Civic Education but these courses are only taught to individuals that display an understanding for a higher theoretical form. The theoretical courses are mostly associated with authoritarian or traditional style, which is a comparison to a student's experiences in daily life, holds no meaning or value. Another important point is that the Civic education provided to youth has mostly been used under the guiding principles of Authoritarian regimes to provide a supportive inclination towards their well-defined non-democratic forms of government and the practices listed for this system (Kerr 1999). An example of this can be seen in the curriculum prepared for the Citizen Education system, being practiced in China and the former Soviet Union. The curriculum for Citizen Education in before mentioned countries outlined the importance of government in terms of decision

and policy formulation and the role of the citizen being limited to simply obeying them, without raising any questions or objections against the system. A noticeable flaw in this system dictates that citizens from these two countries did not fully comprehend the importance of their participation in the society.

## Importance Of A Democratic System

The requirements for the democratic system to work in an efficient and effective manner require that every individual in the society presents a willingness for understanding democracy. These individuals should also exhibit their interest in the political, social and economic and governmental processes in their communities. These processes are to be designed in a way which if implemented on social and communal levels should present respect for upholding standards of human rights, for every able person in the system. However, an analysis in the general and civic education system suggests that the efforts towards preparing an individual to fully realize and comprehend their place in the democracy are provided through these two means of education but more is still needed to improve it. This need can further be simplified into the need of educating an individual to fully recognize the skills and abilities needed for a democratic system, the need of moral values in association with ideas and principles based on democracy, motivating every individual to involve themselves and fully act according to the teachings of democracy (Campbell 2016). Understanding these terms will prepare an individual towards actively participating in the democratic functions of their society.

This can only be achieved if an emphasis on the younger generation is present that is centered on conveying them the knowledge, skill, and understanding of democracy in their schools. This is essential since this younger generation of proper democratic citizens will serve both the community and their country in a prominent manner. Noticed from previous studies, it was revealed that most of the countries that exhibited a slight inclination towards a democratic form of government exhibited signs of democracy having little to no involvement in their media or the social institutions having no real public practices. In a system like this, where democracy has been introduced yet the public is not fully exposed to it, presents a realizable threat towards the democratic form of government, as most of the individuals will not understand their role or participation in the prevailing political, economic and social structures present around them.

## Democracy Through Education

Skilled Individuals within a social structure that wish to prepare and convey the teachings of democracy to other people, must show a determination towards committing themselves to fully understanding the core principles of democracy, purpose of teaching democracy, its value in society, the building blocks of a democratic system and its understanding, and nurturing the attitude and views of people according to democratic way of thought (Pataridzea, Sakhelashvilib & Sabaurib 2015). These points can be summarized under the basics of a democratic form of education for citizens or

democracy through education. Although it is essential to understand the major distinguishable factor between education through democracy and democratic education. Democratic education lays down the importance of building a curriculum based on teaching democracy, its structure, and the involved processes. The democratization of education, although not fully related to the above-mentioned forms of education, only points out the importance of education being accessible at levels by the individual of a society.

## Democratic Knowledge & Its Importance

The development of democracy from John Patrick's (a leading educator in the field of democracy in the U.S) perspective is regarded as the development of intellectual capital. This view is further supported by the South African educator, Brenda Leibowitz referred to it as creating civic literacy. The terms intellectual capital and civic literacy forward the necessity towards becoming aware of democracy, the way in which societies and governments are structured, the important functions of their government and learning about the history of their society and its social values. This is a continuation of the previously mentioned necessities are further expanded with creating an understanding for a political, economic, social, and legal system that are functional in society they exist in (Armellini 2012). Being democratically aware also requires that each individual must at least know about the functional constitutions in their country and their human rights. Another aspect of democratic education instills the importance that individuals in the present age must be fully aware of international relations.

Being fully aware in regards to democracy requires an individual to fully obtain the relevant knowledge, skills, and practices. They must understand how democracy and democratic systems are structured and implemented, as well as how these structures are sustained through years to come. A democratic form of education must be able to convey the importance of a society and why societies prefer to continue it (JONES 2012). Another important aspect of democratic education is to teach every individual about the significance of an individual's opinion, voice or concern. They must also fully comprehend the value of decisions being formed on the basis of majority, and at the end but most important is that the rights of minorities are to be protected and respected.

## The Actualization Of Democratic Skills

An individual will only be able to demonstrate effectiveness as a democratic citizen if they have the needed skills that enable them to be fully functional in society. However, the fundamental requirement for any individual to initiate themselves as democratic citizens is that they must possess the initial skills of reading and writing so that they can proactively gather information, have the ability to understand it and then utilize these facts in arguments or in the process of making high-level decisions properly. Possessing these skills will enable an individual to be categorized as a civic participatory writer. The skills for democracy also entail that individuals should own the ability to

indulge themselves in dialogues, conflict-resolving discussions and formal means of negotiation. D. Hess refers to them as “discussions based on controversial issues related to the public.” Fully grasping these skills will enable an individual to understand the pros and cons of any alternatives, evaluation of these alternatives in association with the problem at hand and know which one to implement.

## Understanding Democratic Values

The values taught by the democratic form of education in comparison to innate human values are quite different. The innate values refer to integrity, self-discipline, freedom, justice, understanding human rights, responsibility, and tolerance. The democratic values, since not being innate values, can only be taught through educational curricula structured around democratic teaching. However, the preparation of an educational curriculum that caters to the needs of a democratic education system is perceivably one of the most challenging tasks for educators (McNergney, Ducharme & Ducharme 1999). It is challenging since many members of society conceive it as something that mustn't be part of the education curriculum but rather should be taught at home through family institutions and practices. This perception is loosely found in false thoughts circulating in society, whereas, in actual understanding, it relates to these practices forming an essential part of the societal structure with its corresponding importance towards teaching children about their role as a democratic individual. These decisions, from a democratic perspective, are not personal or private matters but rather have a direct influence on a social and public level.

An inspirational factor that is noticeable is that most of the emergent democracies, examples of South Africa and the former Soviet Union, have presented a positive trend towards making their citizens become aware of their democratic rights and values in society. This was beneficial in terms of giving their citizens an edge in realizing their democratic values, processes, and structures. A close analysis of the functioning democracies in these countries revealed how these individuals proved to be an important aspect of the preparation of educational curricula and their support in implementing them. The only reason why these countries were able to maintain a good standard of democracy is due to the democratic form of education being implemented right from the start of elementary school (Hursh & Ross 2014). Since democratic values are easily taught to youth, with their ability to grasp the broad meaning of democracy, its usefulness, and effectiveness, this was also observed in most of the Latin American countries as well, as they slowly started to realize the importance of democratic education is very influential and the countries that were able to fully implement it over the years are Mexico, Paraguay, and Columbia.

Although in societies that have maintained a strong understanding of the importance of democracy, with the United States as a primary example, the important event of 11 September 2001 established why it is necessary to have youth educated in regards to democratic practices. The desire to have a system properly tailored to fulfill the needs of educating the youth in terms of democracy makes it essential to have them understand it from a cognitive, behavioral and emotional point of view. This is

also important since it will prepare the next generation of democratic leaders as well, providing them with a better understanding of what democracy is, how it is useful and its effectiveness in society.

## Curriculum Preparation

The process of preparing a curriculum that accommodates the needs of democratic subjects being taught in schools requires educators to add democratic theoretical principles as a subject for youngsters and teach them from a highly educated perspective. Delivering the concepts to the students is equally as important as the preparation of a curriculum since a curriculum is only as strong as the professor or instructor delivering it through their lectures. Properly conveying it in a lesson will highlight the underlying problems that democracy can address and how these problems come to exist in the first place. These theories should be broken down into simplistic modules so that students can easily grasp the meaning of each democratic practice (Criddle, Vidovich & O'Neill 2004). Since democratic principles mostly exist as abstracts, an individual mind will be unable to grasp the understanding behind it, over a quick glance.

Furthermore, teachers should avoid the practice of adopting an authoritarian approach towards the democratic subject. They should focus on promoting debates, conversations, and dialogues and engage students in projects that will ask for their immediate focus on acting as a group. Most relevant among these practices are the use of case studies, experiential learning, journals, service learning and the cooperative mode of learning among students. Other practiced forms of teaching include the use of engaging students in activities of utilizing methods to study literature based on comparisons between international cases or constitutions, discussing and analyzing public problems or issues, making use of civic writing or employing the use of public writing to properly advocate for a certain issue. These practices are beneficial since they motivate students to work as a group while forwarding their views and listening to others as well. This activity, as simplistic as it sounds, fulfills the basics of democracy.

The importance of teaching these concepts in schools holds exceptional importance since a child's only mode of interaction other than their home, is at school. Education as a source of democracy is a fact that most countries around the globe have already realized and have also started to implement at various levels throughout educational institutes. Most international organizations that support the view of the democratic form of education have allied themselves with providing support to various institutes in America, spreading awareness towards the topic and preparing students to take on a better perspective for democracy. Presently, the need for democracy being taught in schools across America has been fulfilled through the effective use of including education in curriculums. Researchers have deduced that education has indeed become the primary and only source of creating a widespread influence on democracy.

## Conclusion

The democratic form of education entails the importance of education accessible for children belonging to any and all forms of ethnic backgrounds. Educators in the field of democracy have concluded that education serves as a primary tool to create an awareness of democracy. To fully implement the democratic form of education, it is necessary to educate the youth about the needed skills, values and attitudes to practice democracy and work towards sustaining it throughout the societal structure, as well as in the nation. Education can present an effective method of contribution to democracy and a democratic form of citizenship. Requirements for the democratic system to work in an efficient and effective manner require that every individual in the society presents a willingness to understand democracy. This can only be achieved if an emphasis on the younger generation is present that is centered on conveying them the knowledge, skill, and understanding of democracy in their schools. The process of preparing a curriculum that accommodates the needs of democratic subjects being taught in schools requires educators to add democratic theoretical principles as a subject for youngsters and teach them from a highly educated perspective. Properly conveying it in a lesson will highlight the underlying problems that democracy can address and how these problems come to exist in the first place.

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