Educating for Democracy:
With or without Social Justice[1]

By Paul Carr

Introduction

Increasingly, there is an explicit, as well as an implicit, need to stress democratic values and engagement in education in order to bolster democracy (Portelli & Solomon, 2001). Students, and society at-large, understand that the world in which we live needs to be problematized, better understood, and more effectively connected, especially in light of the obvious inter-dependence between nations, entrenched social, political, military and economic problems, and the quest for human rights and dignity (Gandin & Apple, 2002). With neo-liberal trends blanketing education-systems internationally (Torres, 2005), there is also the counter-current of some educators, marginalized groups and progressive forces requesting a greater emphasis on citizenship, democracy and social justice in education (McLaren, 2007; Vincent, 2003). The debate over the role of education in democratic citizenship education[2] is, therefore, shrouded in controversy (Sears & Hughes, 2006), with some arguing for more competition, higher standards, greater accountability, and the infusion of business in education, and others maintaining that education should be more responsive to the needs of all students, serving as a leveling force to off-set the cultural capital (Delpit, 1996) that some students bring with them to school (Bales, 2006). This latter perspective advocates a more holistic, dynamic as opposed to prescriptive,

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and focused approach for enhancing student engagement related to social justice (Ayers, Hunt, & Quinn, 1988).

This article builds on research related to the perceptions, perspectives, and experiences of educators in relation to democracy in education (Carr, 2006a), which, it is argued, can be viewed as having a significant impact on what students in elementary and secondary schools learn about democracy (McLaren, 2007; Regenspan, 2002), and, importantly, how they are engaged in democracy (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Is there a connection between the formal curriculum and civic engagement? (Apple, 1996). How does democratic education for students manifest itself in relation to the interest-level, background, and engagement of educators? (Thornton, 2006). In other words, to what degree does the level of democratic experience in schools rely on the capacity and interest of educators to become involved in work that inculcates values and experiences aimed at fostering democratic engagement? (Dewey, 1997). Lastly, and of particular interest to this research, I am concerned with the connection that educators make between democracy and social justice in education (Guttman, 1999; Regenspan, 2002).

There are four sections to this article. First, there is a brief overview of some of the salient issues and concerns framing the context and debate on democracy and social justice in education. Second, the approach and methodology for this research is presented. Although reference to the research related to the sample of College of Education students (Carr, 2006a) is made, the primary focus of this paper is on a sample of faculty-members in the same College of Education. Being able to compare and validate diverse findings and perspectives between the two samples provides for a more in-depth and triangulated research. Third, the findings and analysis are presented. Lastly, the final section serves as a discussion of the research, including suggesting policy and curriculum implications, and highlighting the role of teacher education in the debate.

Thick and Thin Democracy

Democracy can be defined in a *thick* or *thin* way (Gandin & Apple, 2002), emphasizing formal and informal aspects as well as a plurality of perspectives. The *thick* interpretation involves a more holistic, inclusive, participatory, and critical engagement, one that avoids jingoistic patriotism (Westheimer, 2006) and a passive, prescriptive curriculum and learning experience (Apple, 1996). This version of *thick* democracy reflects a concern for political literacy (Guttman, 1999), emancipatory engagement (Giroux, 1988), and political action (McLaren, 2007) that critics of the traditional or *thin* conception of democratic education have articulated. The key concern for the *thick* perspective of democracy resides in power relations, identity and social change, whereas the *thin* paradigm is primarily concerned with electoral processes, political parties, and structures and processes related to formal democracy.

Portelli (2001) further defines democracy by distinguishing between "partici-

patory, public and critical democracy, on one hand, and representative, privatized and managed/market democracy, on the other hand" (p. 280). The blanketing of the neo-liberal template on contemporary education must, therefore, be considered in the discussion on democracy (Hill, 2003; Hursh & Martina, 2003). The shifting of focus in the neo-liberal educational agenda toward a constrained curriculum, supposedly high standards, greater focus on employability, and a proliferation of standards, with the concomitant accountability lurking in the background (Bales, 2006), has isolated those who are most interested in critical pedagogy and social justice educational work. The net effect is a decrease in explicitly teaching for and about political literacy (Guttman, 1999; Hill, 2003).

Westheimer and Kahne (2004) have concerns about the conceptualization of democratic education when critical civic engagement is not fully connected, contextualized or problematized within the formal learning experience:

> the visions of obedience and patriotism that are often and increasingly associated with this agenda can be at odds with democratic goals. And even the widely accepted goals—fostering honesty, good neighborliness, and so on—are not *inherently* about democracy. Indeed, government leaders in a totalitarian regime would be as delighted as leaders in a democracy if their young citizens learned the lessons put forward by many of the proponents of personally responsible citizenship: Don't do drugs; show up at school; show up at work; give blood; help others during a flood; recycle; pick up litter; clean up a park; treat old people with respect. These are desirable traits for people living in a community. But they are not democratic citizenship. (p. 244)

Several researchers support this foundational work by suggesting that supposedly intractable issues must be addressed. For instance, Galston (2003) and Hess (2004) argue that teachers must be prepared and willing to address controversial issues in the classroom, and also be able to make direct linkages with civic skills and attitudes as well as democratic engagement in an explicit way. Similarly, Alexander (1999) concludes that democracy must find its resonance within schools in a tangible way, which supports the substantial research by Parker (2002, 2003). As Holm and Farber (2002) reveal, education students at the university level in the US generally have a weak understanding of global issues that directly impact on the lives of Americans, which necessitates further inquiry into the role of teacher-educators.

Of particular concern for this research is the intersection between democracy and social justice in education. Marshall and Oliva (2006) describe social justice as being connected to, and enraptured in, a number of concepts, issues and areas, including equity, cultural diversity, "the need for tolerance and respect for human rights and identity," "the achievement gap," "democracy and a sense of community and belongingness," "inclusion of groups that do not immediately come to mind in our planning, such as the 'differently abled,' girls and women, or those American families with different cultures, languages, or religions," surpassing the concept of inclusion to value all of the abovementioned differences, and, finally, "reaching to the deep roots of injustice emanating from competitive market forces, economic

policies, practical practices, and traditions that maintain elite privileges" (p. 5). They further focus on the moral imperative of ethical and responsible leadership required to achieve social justice (Marshall & Oliva, 2006).

Dantley and Tillman (2006) provide a detailed review of the social justice literature, emphasizing a range of salient considerations. For instance, they focus on the "education of the other," "education about the other," and "education that is critical of privileging and othering," (citing Kumashiro), and "emphasize moral values, justice, equity, care, and respect and the imperative for investigating the impact of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, and disability on the educational outcomes of students", with particular attention paid to marginalized groups (Dantley & Tillman, 2006:18-19). Stressing "moral transformative leadership," they identity three key components: "a progressive or critical theoretical perspective," a deconstruction of the practical realities and perpetuation of "inequities and the marginalization of members of the learning community who are outside the dominant culture," and, lastly, the need to view schools "as sites that not only engage in academic pursuits, but also as locations that help to create activists to bring about the democratic reconstruction of society" (p. 19). The final area of focus for Dantley and Tillman (2006) is social justice praxis (Freire, 1973), linking the "principles of democracy and equity in proactive ways so that the social justice agenda becomes a vibrant part of the everyday work of school leaders" (p. 20). The meshing of theory and practice speaks to the foundation of critical engagement, as enunciated in Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) seminal work on the subject.

Vincent (2003) highlights the importance of identity in her conception of social justice:

> Our understanding of who we are, the others with whom we identify and those with whom we do not, how the social groupings to which we belong are perceived, these factors are now understood to be key in understanding and interrogating the concept of social justice. Education, because of its crucial role in the production and reproduction of particular identities and social positionings, is a particularly fruitful site in which to consider the playing out, or the performance, of social justice and identity issues. (p. 2)

Therefore, the process of defining and striving for social justice is a political enterprise (McLaren, 2007), one that requires critical interrogation of a range of identities, perspectives and structures, especially in relation to inequitable power relations. This issue of accountability within the neo-liberal era must also be critically analyzed in terms of the place of social justice in education (Bales, 2006; Hill, 2003).

In sum, this research seeks to understand, gage and analyze how educators connect to, and with, democracy, particularly in the educational realm, and with a view to underscoring the place of social justice. At this phase, the research does not interrogate the elementary and secondary school student experience and outcomes but, rather, focuses on pedagogical, institutional and cultural relationships that educators may have in shaping the former. This approach, which is developed in the following

pages, aims to elucidate how educators do, and might possibly, shape the democratic experience in schools. The research also leads to insight on potential barriers constraining the teaching, learning and experiencing of democracy in schools.

Research Process and Methodology

This research involves two detailed questionnaires—one for students and the other for faculty—in a College of Education in a university in Ohio.[3] The university in-question is a regional institution, with the vast majority of its students coming from a five-region surrounding-area. It is important to note that the 13,000 students, with roughly 90% at the undergraduate level, are primarily from what could be considered working-class backgrounds. Similarly, many of these students are the first in their families to attend university. Although the university is located in a largely African-American area, approximately 85% of the students are White, with an even slightly higher percentage in the College of Education. Therefore, the university is characterized by an urban context with a largely suburban, commuter student population.

The questionnaires, which were completed on a voluntary and anonymous basis by 129 students (primarily undergraduate) and 15 faculty-members, were administered in November 2005 through January 2006. Approximately 400 questionnaires were distributed to students, and another 50 to full-time and part-time faculty. The survey instrument of some two dozen questions focused on how participants conceptualized and experienced democracy and social justice in education, seeking to establish a linkage between the two central themes. Initial results from the student sample have already been presented elsewhere (Carr, 2006a).

The profile of the 15 faculty participants in this research (Figure 1) is as follows: 9 full-time and 6 part-time, of whom 10 are female and 5 are male, with the majority (8) being in the 51-60 age-range, 3 who are in the 41-50 group, and 4 are above 61 years of age; it is also important to note that 8 of the participants had less than 6 years of experience, and 7 had more than 10 years of experience. Importantly, all of the participants are White. The demographics of this sample are important because the participants who voluntarily responded to the survey can probably be considered those who already have an interest, and some engagement, in the area of inquiry for this research. The findings, therefore, could potentially differ if faculty-members who may not have a direct interest in democracy and social justice in education were to have participated in such a study. When positioning the faculty responses alongside those of the student-sample, which was much larger, the strength of the findings is enhanced.

Both questionnaires contained many of the same questions, most of which solicited a quantitative and qualitative response (see Appendix 1 for survey instrument). One major difference relates to the questions related to how faculty-members assess the democratic engagement of their students. This methodology was used to maximize participation and engagement with the survey instrument, thus allowing

Figure 1: Faculty-Member Research Sample

Participant	Status (F=full-time; P=part-time)	Years teaching at this university	Age <30 (1) 31-40 (2) 41-50 (3) 51-60 (4) >60 (5)	Gender M (1) F (2)	Education -In Ohio (1) -Another State (2) -Outside U.S. (3) -Combination (4)	Parental involvement in politics -Very Much Involved (5) -Not At All Involved (1)
1	F	5	4	M	4	4
2	F	15	5	M	2	1
3	P	5	4	M	2	2
4	F	29	5	M	4	1
5	F	17	4	F	1	4
6	P	1	3	M	1	1
7	P	1	2	F	1	3
8	P	30	5	F	2	4
9	P	16	5	F	2	3
10	P	2	3	F	4	2
11	F	1	1	M	2	1
12	F	5	4	M	1	4
13	F	16	4	M	2	4
14	F	5	4	M	2	4
15	F	22	4	M	1	1

for respondents to flesh out and justify their responses to the questions for which they have provided a score using a Likert scale. In general, many of the student and faculty respondents commented that the survey raised pertinent and interesting questions that required reflection, illustrating, as is borne out in the findings, that democracy is a problematic, and often under-discussed, topic for educators.

Research Findings[4]

The findings from the survey administered to faculty-members are categorized into four themes, with each making reference to the survey completed by students:

- Critical Assessment of (Formal) Democracy
- Democracy and Educational Experience
- Democracy and Social Justice
- Teaching and Democracy

Critical Assessment of (Formal) Democracy

In comparison to the student sample, the faculty-members provided a richer, more nuanced and critical definition of democracy, highlighting the "constraints of a capitalist society" (participant 10), "It (democracy) is social justice, a balance of cultural views" (participant 7), and "A lived experience of community with the view of fairness, equity and justice for all" (participant 15). Students, for the most part, did not refer to the fundamental component of social justice as underpinning to democracy. Several of the respondents highlighted, as was the case with the student sample, the salience of elections. At the same time, the faculty participants

were vastly more critical of the electoral process than the students, although the former, perhaps ironically, participated more actively in elections than the latter. What is notable in the faculty sample is the lack of reference to the globalized context, something that is continually scrutinized in the literature at a time when U.S. democracy is questioned internationally because of its military hegemony (McLaren, 2007). One might argue that democracy and social justice are relative terms, and, therefore, require constant scrutiny, with comparative analysis being a key to challenging processes and structures upholding democracy.

What markedly distinguished the faculty sample from the student one is the assessment of democracy in the U.S., with the students being more generous and positive about the limits of America democracy. Faculty-members stressed that there are "Vested interests" (participant 1), "The structures for governance do not ensure faithfulness to essential democratic values" (participant 2), "our representatives seem to be easily bought" (participant 5), "Money is driving our votes" (participant 6), "corruption by the ruling class has disenfranchised voters" (participant 8), and "Power structures, often invisible to citizens, operate to manipulate and control power" (participant 14). Comments from faculty-members indicate that they had often experienced the formal political system—voting, working with parties, following debates—in a direct way, more so than the student sample, which undoubtedly textured their perception of democracy. Some faculty members, and a large number of students in their sample, stressed the importance of the Constitution in legitimating democracy.

While faculty-members all participated in elections, most were critical of the electoral process, the issues raised, the outcome and the general emphasis placed on voting. Some of the participants noted that they were members of a political party simply because it allowed them to vote in primary elections but that they were generally dissatisfied with the two main parties in the U.S., the Republicans and the Democrats. However, most felt that being involved in elections constituted engagement in democracy, although this appears to be at a weaker level than for the student sample, where voting was considered *the* key part of demonstrating civic engagement. A few respondents did underscore other ways of being part of democracy: "I fight against corruption and class privilege" (participant 8), and "I attempt to live each day in a manner that promotes (a) democratic way of life" (participant 14). In general, perhaps owing to the profession that faculty-members are in, they are more knowledgeable, in a critical way, about democracy, yet they do not appear to have an over-abundance of hope that the present system of democracy, which they find to be highly unsatisfactory, can be re-engineered or transformed. Students had a much less textured analysis of democracy, and were less willing to challenge hegemonic forces.

Democracy and Educational Experience

Similar to the student sample, faculty participants largely felt that their own educational experience was not democratic, emphasizing that "the mechanisms

controlling education often get in the way of democratic values" (participant 2), "The education system is autocratic by nature" (participant 5), "The curriculum, teacher education and funding are controlled by corporations and their political powers" (participant 8), and "Again, hidden and not-so-hidden power structures (i.e., special interest groups) operate to control what is taught, how it is taught, and to whom it is taught. These same groups operate to ensure an inequitable distribution of educational resources that reinforce existing power structures" (participant 14). With a certain period of time for introspection since their high school experience, in addition to a heightened understanding of the issues, a few of the faculty respondents commented that they were involved in activities during their secondary school experience that helped build a democratic consciousness but most felt that it was insignificant or limited to a specific class, as was largely the case with the student sample. In other words, if attempts at inculcating democratic values, experiences, concepts and dispositions were made during the formative years of the faculty, they were, generally, unorganized, implicit as opposed to explicit, and largely uncritical and disconnected from the formal curriculum.

In referring to how citizenship was inter-woven into their high school education, faculty-members highlighted, again, the limited nature of their experience: "Citizenship was narrowly defined when I was in high school. Protest was feared and discouraged, for example" (participant 2); "(I learned about citizenship) Somewhat, but more so on the university level—my hometown was 100% White, 99.9% christian, 85% Norwegian background—you get the picture; it's easier to be a citizen, even in a democracy, when everyone is the same" (participant 4); and "I learned the mechanics and later the law. I did not learn much about the spirit of the law in citizenship in a context outside of voting behaviors" (participant 14). Connecting citizenship with democracy in a formal way, therefore, also becomes an important consideration for educators and decision-makers.

Democracy and Social Justice

Linking social justice to democracy is one area where the faculty sample clearly differentiated itself from the student sample, the latter of which did not emphatically view the two concepts as being inextricably linked. The faculty-members' reasoning included stressing that "without respect and dignity and fairness, the rest is a sham" (participant 2), "without social justice there is no practical application to a government" (participant 7), and, significantly, "this is a critical ingredient absent from democracy as practiced in the U.S. In our nation, one pays lip service to social justice but the wealthier [political elite] ensure that social justice cannot be achieved in the existing system" (participant 14). Contrasting with this view is the contention that democracy alone may not be able to assure social justice: "I believe it is important but democracy doesn't guarantee it [social justice]; it may not even promote it" (participant 4), and "Anytime someone is marginalized or seen as an other is a social injustice; can it be changed through democracy?" (participant 6).

Race, in particular, proves to be a contentious subject in terms of the concept of democracy. Some respondents felt that democracy and racism are incompatible, stating that "The best one can hope for is 'separate but equal.' I believe that most people are convinced that separate can't be equal—ergo no democracy" (participant 4), "The holding of any groups in despair impairs all who thrive related to that despair" (participant 8), and "Existing power structures ensure that certain minorities will never reap the benefits of a democratic system" (participant 14). Conversely, a few of the faculty participants also questioned the merits of race-based analysis or the salience of race, arguing that social class is a more relevant factor related to democracy. The student sample was much more divided in discussing race, with many respondents discounting its salience out-right. However, the African-American and other students of color maintained that racism is systemically entrenched in society, and, further, as a result, that it was extremely problematic to raise it as an issue. Lived experience and the privilege of Whiteness, therefore, is a pivotal factor in shaping one's perspective (Carr, 2006b).

Teaching and Democracy

Whereas the student sample was extremely concerned about "indoctrination" in relation to the question of whether teachers should strive to inculcate a sense of democracy in students, the faculty sample was more solidified in agreeing that teachers should do so. Faculty-members commented that "Students should be exposed to the right to assemble, even if it means going against the school's culture" (participant 6), "If we are 'running' schools for propaganda reasons, then let's teach them the source of propaganda and the why's of schools" (participant 8), "Isn't that what education is" (participant 9), and "(We) Should strive to create an atmosphere where students can choose his/her own democracy or not" (participant 10). Sears and Hughes (2006) raise the issue of indoctrination in citizenship education, underscoring its prevalence in clouding the core learning dispositions, knowledge and engagement.

Concerning the question of whether College of Education students were being prepared to become actively engaged in democracy, faculty respondents expressed primarily two vantage-points. The first is that serious efforts are made to address the notion of democracy in their teaching, illustrated by the following comments: "Fairness. Respect for others, efficacy, teaching that some things are worth fighting for—actually the rights of students are worth fighting for" (participant 9), "I aim to promote critical thinking, a sense of social justice" (participant 10), and "I believe that democratic ideals are critical components of a healthy, safe and caring world. I work to promote responsible experience of freedom" (participant 14). The second is a more problematized interpretation of trying to teach for a democratic educational experience, emphasizing the systemic and cultural pressures pushing against *bone fide* progressive teaching and learning: "People don't accept you when you work to make valuable differences in other people's lives. I have always been the non-traditional student" (participant 7), and "I try but the system mitigates against

free expression and engaged discussion. The university treats students as consumers, thus prohibiting faculty freedoms" (participant 8). Another respondent frames the pragmatic, uncritical experience that many students have as follows: "I do not see proactive participation in much that students do or are about. The attitude is 'tell me what to do exactly—and I'll figure out how to cut corners and get "it" done with the least effort possible'. Those who do not fit this mold really stand out" (participant 5). Interestingly, the student sample was equally divided but in a more polarized way, with a minority indicating that, for the first time, they were starting to think about critically analyzing issues that they had previously taken for granted, and another larger group questioning the relevance of teaching for and about democracy in a educational program (some people mentioned that it was not relevant as they were being prepared to teach, for example, music and math).

Faculty respondents were unequivocal in their assessment of their students' sensitization-level related to democracy: "Their knowledge of politics is amazingly narrow" (participant 1), "They usually exhibit little interest in politics. It is almost as if political silence and disinterest has become politically correct" (participant 5), "I have taught them for 30 years and most just want a work permit and will do whatever is necessary to just be able to work in a white collar job" (participant 8), and "I fear that most are more interested in self than in democracy, and more interested in grades than knowledge" (participant 9). This perception is affirmed in research by Holden and Hicks (2006) and Gandin and Apple (2002). These responses may correlate with the fact that the participants in this study were potentially more inclined to be engaged in democracy, and, therefore, are more critical of the engagement of their students in this regard.

Implications for Teacher Education

This article suggests that the key tenets and values associated to democracy are not necessarily made a priority in teacher training, in educational policy development and in the teaching and learning that takes place in school. The over-emphasis on elections as the key component to democracy, especially for the students, reflects a *thin* notion of democratic engagement, and also corresponds with the general belief that elections equate democracy (Karatnycky, 2002). What is less obvious, especially when reviewing the student sample, is the impact and role of power in shaping democracy (Portelli & Solomon, 2001). If students are not encouraged to undertake critical reflection and analysis in schools, will they be able to do so later on as citizens? Moreover, given the mainstream cultural influence of patriotism (Westheimer, 2006), how is it possible to teach progressive democratic education when the majority of students have had an unsatisfactory experience in high school, and the requirements of No Child Left Behind are perceived to drive the curriculum toward standards and testing more so than constructivist teaching (Hursh & Martina, 2003; Torres, 2005).

To teach about democracy and social justice, educators need to have authentic experiences with/in the subject-area, and be able to cultivate arguments, positions and activities that will enhance the learning experience (Gandin & Apple, 2002; Schugarensky, 2000; Hess, 2004). Parker (2006) builds on Dewey's (1997) seminal work in arguing that teacher-education should involve three strategies—humility, caution and reciprocity—to effectively engage students in the workings of democracy. Stressing that these strategies are "Conceived in the context of trying to approximate domination-free discussions where women and students of color are able to get both their issues (e.g., harassment) and their voices (e.g., feelings of vulnerability) onto the discussion table, … [to have a] broader applicability" (p. 16).

> Difficult though listening is for any of us—especially across social positions—the project is all the more worthy of effort, experimentation, and gumption. In this way, there is some chance that educators might contribute, in a small but significant way, to "re-forming" the democratic public. This public, this heterogeneous group connected by political friendship, fundamentally is one "in which speed takes the place of blood, and acts of decision take the place of acts of vengence" (Pocock, 1998, p. 32). Citizens who possess broad social and disciplinary knowledge plus the disposition to speak and open to one another, whether they like one another or not, are precisely what the democratic project cannot do without. (p.16)

Therefore, a chief concern for teacher education programs relates to dispositions, and whether or not, and how, they can be taught. Thornton (2006) argues strongly in the affirmative, and, moreover, that dispositions are critical components to reaching students, especially, in her study, those in an urban context.

In order for faculty in teacher education programs to effectively become engaged in democratic education, there needs to be a connection with the macro-level context of state and national "accountability" systems, which have increasingly focused on standards that diminish critical social justice work (Bales, 2006). Bales (2006) argues that teacher education programs need to be more vigilant in relation to international trends, research, and developing a relationship between teachers and learners: "This relationship is not achieved through the acquisition of a discrete and finite set of teacher skills. Rather, these teachers reflect on their practice and apply newly generated knowledge t their ever-changing classroom context." (p.405) She concludes that "Teacher educator professional need to examine how we might alter the accountability trajectory in the policy spectacle that surrounds us and take control of our destiny" (Bales, 2006, p. 405), which raises the issue of how far democratic education can be effectively pursued within tightly regimented, and sometimes highly prescriptive, teacher educator programs that are weary of not meeting the "standards."

In another challenge to teacher education programs, Wilson Cooper (2006) focuses on collaborative inquiry, which is "difficult, messy, and demanding, as it lacks the straightforwardness and efficiency that characterizes some hierarchical research approaches. Yet it aligns with democratic and social justice-oriented values" (p. 129). She stresses that faculty-members can "refine their ideologies and

missions, and ultimately, improve their practice" (p. 129) through structured and critical collaborative inquiry related to social justice, which meshes well with the connected problematic of democracy in education. Similarly, Gore, Griffths and Ladwig (2004) emphasize the importance of integrating the four principles—intellectual quality, relevance, supportive environment, and recognition of difference—of Productive Pedagogy (PP) more effectively into teacher education programs so as to allow for "meaningful learning experiences that occur in an environment that supports learning and values diversity" (p. 376). Arguing that PP needs to be introduced early in the teacher education program with the foundational presence that it merits, and, moreover, it should address the following issues:

> 1. The overemphasis on classroom environments and processes rather than on substance and purposes.
>
> 2. The relationships between foundational studies, curriculum studies and field experiences which are currently insufficiently connected.
>
> 3. The purpose and structure of field experiences which centre too often on practicing teaching techniques with relatively little concern for what is being taught and the quality of learning produced.
>
> 4. The focus on student management relative to student learning, which mistakenly assumes that management should be addressed first and separately.
>
> 5. The emphasis on syllabus content and constraints of the formal curriculum relative to identifying central concepts and producing depth of understanding.

In sum, Colleges and Faculties of Education need to more conscientiously strive to teach about and for democracy, focusing on social justice at several levels, and striving to achieve authentic discussion and action. This relates to a process of concerted effort, reflection and interrogation, and cannot be seen simply as an "add-on" or supplementary requirement if teacher-education students are to become critically engaged.

As pointed out by Parker (2006), teaching students to listen and discuss requires a number of predispositions and contextual paramters. Regenspan (2002) provides an example of this by stating that:

> The point to me is learning to teach precisely those students who populate our courses and not the "ideal" students of progressive backgrounds we might wish we could be teaching. There is a parallel practices issue here: we want our students to teach the very children who are in their classrooms, not the ideal ones who already share enthusiasms and perspectives. (p. 589)

In other words, teaching about controversial issues, such as democracy and social justice, must take into account the starting-point for students, but clearly this should not infer that such engagement should be avoided. Therefore, the importance of effective resources that outline the impetus, conceptual framework and application of social justice education (Adams, Bell & Griffen, 1997; Marshal & Oliva, 2006) needs to be highlighted, and also appropriately positioned. Having resources alone

will not change the educational experience for students if teachers are timid about engaging in critical dialogue and work.

Patrick (2003) argues for an integrated approach to teaching about democracy, seeking a balance between various types of skills, knowledge and dispositions.

> Effective education for citizenship in a democracy dynamically connects the four components of civic knowledge, cognitive civic skills, participatory civic skills, and civic dispositions. Effective teaching and learning of civic knowledge, for example, require that it be connected to civic skills and dispositions in various kinds of activities. Evaluation of one component over the other—for example, civic knowledge over skills or vice-versa—is a pedagogical flaw that impedes civic learning. This, teaching should combine core content and the processes by which students develop skills and dispositions. (p. 3)

This approach is compatible with the proposal of the Corporation for National and Community Service (2005), which advocates three central pillars to citizenship education: civic literacy, civic virtues, and civically-engaged behaviors. The absence, or, rather, extremely nuanced approach to democratic citizenship is evident when considering that only three US States have specific standards for civic education, although almost half of the States have addressed some components of civic education in the social studies curriculum and standards (RMC Research Corporation, 2005, 7). Similarly, Galston (2003) notes that the National Assessment of Educational Progress Civics Assessment has provided evidence of major shortcomings in civic knowledge in schools.

> For fourth-, eighth-, and (most relevant for our purposes) 12th-graders, about three-fourths were below the level of proficiency. Thirty-five percent of high school seniors tested below basic, indicating near-total civic ignorance. Another 39% were at the basic level, demonstrating less than the working knowledge that citizens need. (pp. 31-32)

In arguing for an increase in civic knowledge—which Galston (2003) feels is supportive of more enhanced democratic values, political participation, changing legislation, better integration of immigrants and others, and less mistrust of politicians—it is critical to develop and sustain explicit linkages with communities and local institutions, increase focused professional development, emphasize clear and specific objectives and activities in the curriculum related to civic education, focus on "real-life" experiences, and significantly enhance the culture of the school, including extra-curricular activities (Glaston, 2003, 32-33). The findings from the research in this paper indicate that the appropriate balance between such critical components—skills, knowledge and dispositions, on one hand, and an open, dynamic and critically engaged curriculum, and teaching and learning conceptual framework, on the other hand—has not yet been attained.

Another fundamental teacher education issue in relation to educating for democracy concerns the supervision of social justice activities and education. Jacobs

(2006) formulates a number of questions in relation to the supervision aspect that cloud the spectrum and rationale for teaching social justice, reminding us of how this type of work needs to be problematized:

> • Can we realistically expect preservice teachers to add issues of diversity and injustice to their already overflowing plate of concerns?
>
> • Can preservices teachers be expected to take the risk of engaging in critical reflection when they are often the least powerful players in the triad (cooperating teacher, university supervisor, preservice teacher)?
>
> • Who should be setting the agenda for teaching observations?
>
> • Should supervisors see their jobs as just supporting preservice teachers in their everyday struggles with teaching, or should they be a "positive irritant" in regard to critical issues?
>
> • How do we open conversations about race, class, or gender differences when all seems to be going smooth in the classroom? (pp. 35-36)

As is highlighted in the research presented in this article, there are no easy answers to teaching about and for democracy. Despite the strong reasons to do so, there are a number of obstacles, some of which are systemic, to creating the appropriate mind-set to focusing on critical democratic education. However, it is clear that such engagement needs to take place if there is any hope of current and aspiring teachers effectively cultivating democratic values and experiences in the students they will teach. Part of the response, ultimately, resides in a broader or *thicker* notion of democracy, one that fully includes the international context (Holden & Hicks, 2007; Gandin & Apple, 2002).

Conclusion

To teach about politics, democracy and civic engagement in schools, do educators need to be more politically aware and involved? Giroux (1997) argues affirmatively that teachers need to be more activist and politicized in order to counter the plethora of inequities perpetrated in society. Similarly, McLaren (2007) maintains that teachers must refuse to take a neutral posture that is antithetical to the needs of the working class. The challenge of providing a space for such engagement is enveloped in the moral imperative of providing ethical and, as defined by Ryan (2006), inclusive leadership, which conceptualizes the curriculum, standards and accountability in a more socially just way (Fullan, 2005). Teacher education programs need to be cognizant of the dangers in being too focused on standards, and not enough on the teaching and learning processes leading to social justice and critical engagement (Wilson Cooper 2006).

Acknowledging and interrogating, therefore, the democratic experiences, perspectives and ideologies of those who teach current and future teachers (undergraduate and graduate education students), which has been the focus of this

research, is deemed to be pivotal in understanding how well future educators will be prepared to face the challenges of an increasingly diverse and globalized classroom. In sum, faculty-members should make efforts, and be supported to do so, to more explicitly address democratic education in their courses, research and activities with education students, especially with a view to emphasizing a critical perspective of social justice.

Notes

[1] For the purposes of this article, social justice is intended to mean the political, social, cultural, economic and legal components of society, especially in relation to education, that address the explicit as well as implicit manifestations of identity, difference, marginalization, discrimination and inequitable power relations. Similarly, it seeks to address the intersectionality of identity, far out-stretching normative notions of racial diversity as enveloping the totality of diversity. Lastly, the focus herein is on critical and political literacy, which are key elements to social justice (Portelli & Solomon 2001; McLaren, 2007; Freire, 1973).

[2] The notions and underlying principles of citizenship education and democratic education are often conflated to mean the same thing, although there can be specifically narrow interpretations of each (Sears & Hughes, 2006). In this paper, the focus is on the critical aspects of democracy that lead to political literacy, which encompasses the more progressive notions of citizenship education (Patrick, 2003; Parker, 2003).

[3] The identity of the university is unimportant for the purposes of this research, as the objective is to present findings and analysis so as to be able to discuss the issue of democracy and social in education at the conceptual, theoretical and marco levels, outside of the particular concerns of a distinct institutional environment. However, the context for the research is addressed in order to gage the generalizability of the findings.

[4] In order to maintain the anonymous nature of the participants, they are referred to as a number (i.e., participant 1).

[5] The survey has been modified in two minor ways for the purpose of publication in this article: (1) in order to maintain the anonymity of the participating university, the name of the institution has been deleted; and (2) the spacing has been altered in order to shorten the length.

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Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire[5]

Questionaire on Citizenship and Democracy
for X University College of Education Faculty

Section 1: General Information

1. I am a member of the faculty of X University's College of Education: Yes ___ No ____
(Please note that this survey is for X University College of Education faculty-members only)

2. Full-time faculty ____ Part-time faculty ____

3. Number of years at the X University College of Education:_____

4. What is your specific area or program of study? (optional) _____

5. Age: 30 and under ___ 31-40 ____ 41-50 _____ 51-60 _____ 61 and above ____

6. Gender: Male ___ Female ____

7. Racial Origin: _____ (Please self-identify)

8. Ethnic Origin: _____ (Please self-identify)

9. Educated in: Ohio ____ Another State in the US ____ Outside of the US ____ Other (i.e., a combination of the above) _____

10. From your perspective, how actively involved in politics were your parents? (1=not at all involved; 5=very much involved) 1 2 3 4 5

Section 2: Questions on Democracy
(NOTE: Please expand on answers for each question, and use additional sheets of paper if necessary.)

1. How would you define democracy?

2. Do you feel that the US is democratic? (1=not very democratic; 5=very democratic)
1 2 3 4 5

3. From your perspective, is the education system in which you were education democratic? (1=not very democratic; 5=very democratic)
1 2 3 4 5

4. In your opinion, how important are elections to democracy? (1=not very important; 5=very important)
1 2 3 4 5

5. Do you vote in elections for which you have been eligible to vote? YES____NO ____
Please explain. Why was it important to vote or not vote?

6. Are you satisfied with the issues raised in elections? (1= not very satisfied: 5 = very satisfied)
1 2 3 4 5
Please explain: Are there other issues that aren't raised that you feel merit attention?

7. Are you a member of a political party? YES____ NO _____
Please explain. How important is this to you?

8. Do you feel that you are actively engaged in democracy? (1= not at all actively engaged: 5= very actively engaged)
1 2 3 4 5
Please explain the reason for your rating.

9. How important is social justice within democracy? (1=not at all; 5= very much so)
1 2 3 4 5
Please explain the reason for your rating.

10. Did your high school experience have an impact on your thinking about democracy? (1=not a great deal; 5=a great impact)

1 2 3 4 5

Please explain the reason for your rating.

11. Do you feel that teachers should strive to inculcate a sense of democracy in students? (1=they should not at all; 5= they should most definitely do so)

1 2 3 4 5

Please explain. Are teachers capable of nurturing democratic values in students?

12. Do you feel that your teaching at X University is preparing students well to become actively engaged in democracy? (1=not at all; 5= very much so)

1 2 3 4 5

Please explain the reasons for your rating.

13. How important do you feel the issue of racism is in relation to democracy? (1=not very important; 5= very important)

1 2 3 4 5

Please explain the reasons for your rating.

14. Are you satisfied with the quality of elected officials in the US in general? (1=not at all satisfied; 5=very satisfied)

1 2 3 4 5

15. What should be done to improve democracy in the U.S.?

Section 3: Questions on Citizenship

1. How would you define citizenship?

2. In your opinion, are citizenship and democracy related? (1=not at all; 5= very much related)

1 2 3 4 5

3. Can one still be a good citizen if she/he does not vote in elections? (1=not at all; 5=very much so)

1 2 3 4 5

4. Thinking back to high school, would you say that you learned a great deal about citizenship in school? (1=not very much at all; 5=a great deal)

1 2 3 4 5

Please explain. Did high school prepare you to become a good citizen?

5. From your perspective, to what extent is social justice a critical component of citizenship? (1=not a very critical component; 5=very much a critical component)

1 2 3 4 5

6. As a teacher-educator, to what extent are you concerned with teaching about citizenship? (1=not concerned at all; 5=very concerned)

1 2 3 4 5

7. Would you say that you are preparing students at X University well to deal with citizenship in education? (1=not very well prepared; 5= very well prepared)

1 2 3 4 5

8. Has your understanding of citizenship changed as a result of the September 11 attacks? (1=not changed at all; 5= very much changed)

1 2 3 4 5

Section 4: Concluding Comments

1. Do you have any additional comments on democracy?

2. Do you have any additional comments on citizenship?

3. Do you have any comments on this questionnaire?

4. Would you be interested in being interviewed on the subjects raised in this questionnaire? If yes, please provide your name and e-mail address.

Thank you for participating in this research project.